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THE
GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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"THE DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS" AND
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REVELATION

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Redeeming Love.

Unto him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.—Rev. i. 5, 6.

John is writing to the seven churches of Asia, representative of all churches in all time. He salutes them in the name of Father, Son, and Spirit, though employing unusual phraseology, coined in his own mint and very precious. While setting forth the work and glory of Christ as "the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth," he can contain himself no longer. He cannot deliver his message till he has relieved his heart, and he pours forth, as from a fountain of thanksgiving aspiring heavenward, the anthem of the Church of the redeemed below—"Unto him that loveth us!"

An utterance like this gathers up so many experiences in itself; it implies so much, reminds us of so much, suggests so much. In the story of the Roman Empire we read of the banquet in which, because the rarest wines were not costly enough, the guests drank from goblets in which priceless pearls had been dissolved. But how richly filled is the chalice containing the thanksgivings of saints, forgiven, cleansed, and fitted for lofty service; and who can estimate the significance of the praises they offer to their Saviour for His redeeming grace? And best of all, such a text, while reminding us of our sins and our redemption, our trials and deliverances, our evil and its mastery, our low estate and the rank to which Christ has raised us, leads entirely away from self and fastens all our attention on another Figure—to Him be glory for ever!

¶ Like Christian who, encountering the perils of the Valley, found there also the delivering power of the Lord of the Hill, the soul redeemed and restored cannot but sing,—

O world of wonders! (I can say no less)
That I should be preserv'd in that distress
That I have met with here! O blessed be
The Hand that from it hath delivered me!
Dangers in darkness, devils, hell, and sin
Did compass me, while I this vale was in:
Yea, snares, and pits, and traps, and nets did lie
My path about, that worthless silly I
Might have been catch'd, entangled, and cast down.
But since I live, let Jesus wear the Crown.

The text is an ascription of praise unto Him whose love is—

I. An Unceasing Love—"who loveth us."

II. An Emancipating Love—"who loosed us from our sins."

III. An Enfranchising Love—"who made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father."

I.

The Love that is Ever with Us.

"Unto him that loveth us."

So the true text reads. Some copyist, who was thinking more of grammar than of Christian experience, thought it must be a mistake, and altered it to "loved." Or perhaps St. John himself first wrote "loved" and then bethought him: "Why should I say 'loved' when He loves us still?" At any rate, this is the conviction of the Early Church: the Jesus whom they had known not only loved them while He was their Companion on the earth, but loves them still, shares therefore in that further quality of the Godhead of which St. John writes elsewhere: "God is Love," and gives to that quality just what each man requires to find in it—personal direction towards himself. Thus Jesus is the link between the universal God and the individual soul. What without Him would be incredible, not only becomes credible, but is actually realized through Him. God loves me: I know it by referring myself to the historical Jesus: and when that is so, He has for me the value of God.

1. *Love begins with God.*—That is where our hopes are born. That is the background in which we find the warrant for all

our confidence and all our faith. God loves us. All effective reasoning concerning human redemption must begin here. God loves! The beginning is not to be found in us, in our inclinations and gropings and resolvings and prayers. These are essential but secondary. The primary element is the inclination of God. *Omnia exeunt in mysterium*, says Sir Thomas Browne; all things issue in mystery. But also all things issue from mystery; by which we mean not the incomprehensible, but the all-comprehending; not the unintelligible, but the self-sufficing and self-explaining; not the blackness of darkness, but the blaze of truth with excess of light.

We cannot get behind Divine love as a cause. In Deuteronomy (vi. 7) Israel is told that Jehovah loved His people—because He loved them. The Christian hymn says the same thing. "He hath loved, He hath loved us, we cannot tell why; He hath loved, He hath loved us because He would love." The Jews were chosen, not because of their numbers, not because of their warlike virtues, not because of their "religious instincts" or amenability to religious teaching, but because God loved them. A Syrian ready to perish was their father, but God made of them a nation to whom all the world has been, and still is, indebted. That does not mean that Divine love is irrational, arbitrary, capricious; but it does mean that for personal beings love is a primary fact, a source, a fountain, an ultimate explanation, beyond which it is well not to strive to pass—especially the unworthy, the wayward, and the evil; all they can do is to sing—

> Who for me vouchsafed to die,
> Loves me still—I know not why!

¶ The fire which warms the hearthstone is not original; it is derivative, and refers us back to the sun. The candle with which we search for the lost piece of silver is not original and originating; it is borrowed flame from the great altar-fires of the sun. Earth's broken lights, a candle here, a lamp there, a fire yonder, all index backwards, and point us to the great originating centre of solar light and heat. The lamps and candles and fires that burn in human life, everything that is bright and genial and aspiring, have reference backward to some creative and beneficent source. "We love, because he first loveth us." "He first loveth!" That is the primary quantity, and every kindly feeling that warms the

heart, every pure hope that illumines the mind, were begotten of that most gracious source.[1]

2. *This love never leaves us.*—The past tense expresses a blessed truth, but "loveth" includes all—past, present, and future; it is a timeless word, bringing with it fresh breezes from across the ocean of eternity. It is not a single act that is here indicated, but a state abiding. For this "loveth" is the timeless present of that Divine nature, of which we cannot properly say either that it was or that it will be, but only that it for ever is; and the outgoings of His love are like the outgoings of that Divine energy of which we cannot properly say that it did or that it will do, but only that it ever does. His love, if one may use such a phrase, is lifted above all tenses, and transcends even the bounds of grammar. He did love. He does love. He will love. All three forms of speech must be combined in setting forth the ever present, because timeless and eternal, love of the Incarnate Word.

The great poems of the world have been love-poems; they have been poems of love betrayed, or unrequited, or they have been thunders wailed out over a dead and buried love. But the greatest love-story of all is of One who loves for ever because He lives for ever. The Lord Jesus Christ has awakened a passionate love in unnumbered hearts, but among them all not one sweet, dead, disappointed face—like Elaine's confronting Lancelot at the river-gate of Arthur's palace—upturned in mute appeal, has ever reproached the Crucified for having offered to Him in vain an unmeasured affection. The love of the living has been offered to the living, and only a living Lord could have awakened and satisfied a love which has been poured out at His feet like spikenard. It is this consciousness of being loved that gives ever deeper meaning and ever gathering volume to the great doxology, "Unto him be the dominion for ever."

¶ When Sir James Mackintosh lay dying, his friends by the bedside saw his lips slightly moving, and as one of them desired to catch, if possible, the last words of the great and good man, he leaned over, and applying the ear close, heard him saying, "Jesus, love, the same thing; Jesus, love, the same thing."[2]

¶ There is a highroad which I knew full well away in the

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Apostolic Optimism*, 237.
[2] A. H. Drysdale, *A Moderator's Year*, 99.

distant North, and a gladsome, shining river keeps it company. Their tracks remain in closest fellowship. They turn and wind together, and at any moment you may step from the dusty highway and drink deep draughts from the limpid stream. "There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God." Here is the hard, dusty highway of the individual life, and near it there flows the gladdening river of the Eternal Love. It turns with our turnings, and winds through all the perplexing labyrinths of our intensely varied day. We may ignore the river; we cannot ignore it away. Thrice blessed are they who heed and use it. "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." The inspiring resources are always just at hand. The river of love runs just by the hard road. It never parts company with the highway.[1]

3. *We can set no limit to the extent of this love.*—"Unto him that loveth us." The words become especially beautiful if we remember that they come from the lips of him whose distinction it was that he was "the disciple whom Jesus loved." It is as if he had said, "I share my privilege with you all. I was no nearer Him than you may be. Every head may rest on the breast where mine rested. Having the sweet remembrance of that early love, these things write I unto you that ye also may have fellowship with me in that which was my great distinction. I, the disciple whom Jesus loved, speak to you as the disciples whom Jesus loves." He is speaking of One who had been dead for half a century, and he is speaking to people none of whom had probably ever seen Jesus in His lifetime, and most of whom had not been born when He died. Yet to them all he turns with that profound and mighty present tense, and says, "He loveth us." He was speaking to all generations, and telling all the tribes of men of a love which is in active operation towards each of them, not only at the moment when St. John spoke to Asiatic Greeks, but at the moment when we Englishmen read his words, "Christ that loveth us."

When we extend our thoughts or our sympathies to a crowd, we lose the individual. We generalize, as logicians say, by neglecting the particular instances. That is to say, when we look at the forest we do not see the trees. But Jesus Christ sees each tree, each stem, each branch, each leaf, just as when the crowd

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Apostolic Optimism*, 239.

thronged Him and pressed Him, He knew when the tremulous finger, wasted and shrunken to skin and bone, was timidly laid on the hem of His garment; as there was room for all the five thousand on the grass, and no man's plenty was secured at the expense of another man's penury, so each of us has a place in that heart; and my abundance will not starve you, or your feeding full diminish the supplies for me. Christ loves all, not with the vague general philanthropy with which men love the mass, but with the individualizing knowledge and special direction of affection towards the individual which demands for its fulness a Divine nature to exercise it. And so each of us may have our own rainbow, to each of us the sunbeam may come straight from the sun and strike upon our eye in a direct line, to each of us the whole warmth of the orb may be conveyed, and each of us may say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me."

¶ Let us now turn aside and look upon this great sight, of Love that burneth with fire, yet is not consumed; of Love that having poured out its soul unto death, yet liveth, to see of that soul's long travail and to be satisfied with it. "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." When were Love's arms stretched so wide as upon the Cross? When did they embrace so much as when Thou, O Christ, didst gather within Thy bosom the spears and arrows of the mighty to open us a Lane for Freedom![1]

¶ "He loveth us." That covers past, present, and future. The love of our Redeemer stretches from eternity to eternity. It had no beginning, and will have no ending. It is unchanged, unmodified, untouched, either by lapse of time or variation of circumstance. Utterly inexhaustible, it flows incessantly in undiminished and undimiuishable tide into the lives towards which it is directed.

Immortal Love, for ever full,
For ever flowing free,
For ever shared, for ever whole,
A never ebbing sea.[2]

[1] Dora Greenwell, *The Patience of Hope* (ed. 1894), 130.
[2] *Hector Mackinnon: A Memoir*, by his Wife (1914), 181.

II.

The Love that has Made Us Free.

"And loosed us from our sins by his blood."

This work is described by two different words in A.V. and R.V.—"washed" and "loosed." These are two figures for one fact. There is but the difference of a single letter in the Greek, and not a letter of difference in the reality, though the point of view differs. The one word regards sin as defilement, the other as bondage. The one thanksgiving rejoices in our being purified, the other in our being freed. The same Divine act accomplishes both ends; and at one time we may rejoice in the thought that the old foul self may be made clean, at another in the delightful consciousness that our chains are snapped, the dungeon walls broken down, and the slave is emancipated for ever.

1. The notion of bondage underlies the metaphor of loosing a fetter. If we would be honest with ourselves, in our account of our own inward experiences, that bondage we all know. There is the bondage of sin as guilt, the sense of responsibility, the feeling that we have to answer for what we have done, and to answer not only here but also hereafter, when we appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Guilt is a chain. And there is the bondage of habit, which ties and holds us with the cords of our sins, so that, slight as the fetter may seem at first, it has an awful power of thickening and becoming heavier and more pressing, till at last it holds a man in a grip from which he cannot get away.

¶ Sin finds men out in the form of Temptation. Temptation is the result of constantly yielding. A constant doing passing into a habit—it really comes to be a predisposition to do what we have done before over again, and this is temptation. We have built up the muscle-fibre of temptation by constantly using it. Some day Tennyson's lines will be true, that our character is a part of all we have met. Look at the brain. It is made up, as you know, of countless cells and processes. If an intellectual process runs through our brain once, it leaves comparatively no effect. But say it over a hundred times, and a footpath is worn through the brain; the hundred and first time will be easy. Say it a thousand times, and lo! through all the cellular structure of

the brain there is for ever laid a thoroughfare upon this one intellectual idea, and temptations and sins march to and fro in endless procession along the beaten track. Men do not commit two different kinds of sin. You have your own favourite sin, and I have mine, and as it grows the trick is intensified, the path more beaten still, and the end is Death. One thing kills a man, and if you are guilty of one sin, your doom is sealed. Therefore guard against making a thoroughfare. Decide once for all to close the thoroughfare by gates which shall last for ever. Let that evil thought never pass that way again.[1]

2. But we have an Emancipator. "He loosed us from our sins." This proclaims not a mere cleansing, but a liberation; not the remission of penalty only, but the removal also of moral bondage. Sin's bondage is one of the strongest forces in life; for sin, like a tyrant, subjugates memory, deteriorates moral strength, and increasingly destroys a man's power of resistance and action. And to such as are fast bound in its remorseless grip, this Evangel proclaims "liberty to the captives," such liberty indeed as befits and enables men to serve God "in holiness and righteousness."

¶ I think I have never coveted happiness, but freedom of spirit I have earnestly desired, freedom from that burden which crushes joy and sorrow both—the mere dead weight of care and of remorse. And I believe God, who gave me this desire, has in some measure fulfilled it, and will fulfil it more in spite of my rebellion. The spirit of freedom, of peace, of a sound mind, is, I am sure, given to us. We are only to remember its presence and to walk in it.

The Spirit does make intercessions within us, with groanings that cannot be uttered, and if the sense of personal sins presses them out, they do extend, I trust, to the whole universe; they are groans for its redemption and not for ours only. The word redemption, all the past which it implies, all the future which it points to, has for me a wonderful charm. I cannot separate the idea of deliverance from the idea of God, or ever think of man as blessed except as he enters into God's redeeming purpose, and labours to make others free.

The bondage of circumstances, of the world, but chiefly of self, has at times seemed to me quite intolerable; the more because it takes away all one's energy to throw it off, and then the difficulty of escaping to God! of *asking* to have the weight taken away! Oh there is infinite comfort in the thought that

[1] *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 478.

He hears all our cries for rescue, and is Himself the Author and Finisher of it.[1]

3. "He loosed us from our sins by his blood." Christ is the Emancipator, and the instrument by which He makes us free is His blood. The teaching of Scripture is that the death of Christ was necessary for the remission of man's sin. The explanation of that necessity may be beyond us; a full explanation is certainly beyond our powers at present. But not only is the fact made clear in Scripture, the reasons are not obscurely shadowed forth. And we are taught that without such death God could not Himself righteously forgive sin, and that its bands could not be loosed, because the chief bondage which holds an unforgiven sinner under the wrath of a holy God cannot be relaxed by mere fiat, by the single word, Go free! It is not that the Father is angry and the Son steps in to save us from His wrath, as if there could be schism in the Godhead. It is, God so loved the world that He gave His Son to save it, and Christ so loved the world that He loosed the bands of its sins by His blood. As without shedding of blood there was no remission under the Jewish law, so without the death of the cross there is no redemption for a sinful world. A Saviour who stopped short of death would have lacked the power to loose man from sin, in relation either to God or to the powers of evil or to his own moral and spiritual constitution.

¶ Any simple statement of the Gospel had a great attraction for him, and the simpler it was he enjoyed it the more, if it was not controversial but the genuine utterance of the heart. The account of redemption from the lips of an African woman, a slave, impressed him deeply; he liked to repeat it in conversation, and on one occasion at a meeting for prayer, he stood up and said without further remark of his own: "I have never heard the gospel better stated than it was put by a poor negress: 'Me die, or He die; He die, me no die.'"[2]

¶ Some of the great artists of the Crucifixion have painted the cross as reaching into the skies, exercising a cosmic influence for the world upon which its foot rests, whilst its top touches and moves the very heavens. There is such a painting by Luino at Lugano, and another by Guido Reni at Rome. The head of the

[1] *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, i. 520.

[2] A. Moody Stuart, *Recollections of the late John Duncan*, 193.

suffering Christ in the latter is often reproduced, but the whole of the picture should be seen to understand the artist's thought. And so the power of the Cross touches the burden of sin which we sinners carry on our shoulders at a thousand points, loosening it at every one and so causing it to fall away from our shoulders in the way Bunyan describes. Freed from condemnation in the sight of God, we are freed altogether: it is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? We are freed from the bondage of law, from the thraldom of the devil, from the power of evil habit, from the fear of death and that which follows after death.

Neither passion nor pride
Thy cross can abide,
But melt in the fountain that streams from Thy side.[1]

III.

The Love that has Given Us Citizenship.

"And he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father."

1. Here the Revisers adopted, not the reading that would give the smoothest and simplest English, but the reading that had the highest support in the Greek text. And so they substituted "a kingdom" for "kings." This substitution places the promises of the new dispensation in direct connexion with the facts of the old. The language of St. Peter and St. John was no novel coinage. It was merely an adaptation to the Israel after the spirit of the titles and distinctions accorded of old to the "Israel after the flesh." There was a holy nation, a peculiar people, a regal priesthood, before Christianity. It was only enlarged, developed, spiritualized, under the gospel. The foundation passage in the Old Testament on which the language of both Christian Apostles alike was moulded is the promise made to the Israelites through Moses on Sinai, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people . . . ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." Thus the mention of the kingdom links Sinai with Zion—the old with the new.

If we lose the idea of the kingdom we lose with it the most

[1] W. T. Davison, *Strength for the Way*, 29.

valuable lesson of the passage. A kingdom denotes an organized, united whole. It implies consolidation and harmony. It is not enough that we should realize the individual Christian as a king; we must think of him as a member of a kingdom. The kings of this world are constantly at war one with another. Self-aggrandizement and self-assertion seem natural to their position. Solitariness, isolation, independence—these are ideas inseparable from the kingly throne. But this is not the conception of the true disciple of Christ. He is before all things a member of a body. In the Kingdom of Christ indeed all the citizens are kings, because all are associated in the kingliness of Christ. But they are citizens still. They have the duties, the responsibilities, the manifold and complex relationships of citizens. This Kingdom of God, this Church of Christ, exists for a definite end. Its citizen-kings have each their proper functions, perform each their several tasks, contribute each their special gifts to the fulfilment of this purpose.

¶ The Kingdom of God cometh to a man when he sets up Jesus' Cross in his heart, and begins to live what Mr. Laurence Oliphant used to call "the life." It passes on its way when that man rises from table and girds himself and serves the person next him. Yesterday the kingdom was one man, now it is a group. From the one who washes to the one whose feet are washed the kingdom grows and multiplies. It stands around us on every side,—not in Pharisees nor in fanatics, not in noise nor tumult, but in modest and Christ-like men. One can see it in their faces, and catch it in the tone of their voices. And if one has eyes to see and ears to hear, then let him be of good cheer, for the Kingdom of God is come. It is the world-wide state, whose law is the Divine will, whose members obey the spirit of Jesus, whose strength is goodness, whose heritage is God.[1]

2. We were made not only a "kingdom," but also "priests." The two ideas are not carelessly united. Indeed they cannot be separated. The uniting bond is the words, "*unto God.*" One may be a king without being a priest, but not a king unto God. Human life is a Divine thing. It has no coherence, no meaning, no use or end except as it is brought under the laws of God. A man does not *find* himself, he does not get upon the track of true living, until along with self-culture he combines the rule and habit

[1] John Watson, *The Mind of the Master.*

of service—making the most of others as well as the most of himself.

(1) *The priest has direct access to God.*—All of us, each of us, may pass into the secret place of the Most High, and stand there with happy hearts, unabashed and unafraid, beneath the very blaze of the light of the Shekinah. And we can do so because Jesus Christ has come to us with these words upon His lips: "I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." The path into that Divine Presence is blocked for every sinful soul by an immense black rock, its own transgressions; but He has blasted away the rock, and the path is patent for all our feet. By His death we have the way made open into the holiest of all. And so we can come, come with lowly hearts, come with childlike confidence, come with the whole burden of our weaknesses and wants and woes, and can spread them all before Him, and nestle to the great heart of God the Father Himself. We are priests to God, and our prerogative is to pass within the veil by the new and living Way which Christ is for us.

¶ There were many Old Testament customs that were the chrysalis of some beautiful winged truth, to be set free at the touch of Christ. The shell had to be shattered, that such spiritual treasure as Judaism held might become available for the world. That was what Christ meant when He said He came not to destroy, but to fulfil. Priesthood was abolished in the narrow exclusive sense by making all believers priests.[1]

(2) *The priest is appointed to offer sacrifice.*—In one sense the sacrifice is offered already; our High Priest offered Himself once for all upon the altar of the cross, and in that sacrifice none other may share. Yet as our deepest sufferings in His cause "fill up that which is lacking of his afflictions," so our sacrifices are participations, such as men may make, by union with Him, in the one great act of obedience whereby He reconciled us to His Father. We "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Even in the Old Testament there is the suggestion that God had some pleasure in the smell of the sacrifice. Gradually, through the influence of the prophet in Israel, there grew up a spiritual conception of sacrifice. Micah's protest

[1] F. C. Hoggarth.

(chap. vi.) and the Psalmist's confession (Ps. li.) represent the final teaching of the Old Testament on the matter. This spiritual idea of sacrifice runs throughout the New Testament; *e.g.*, "I beseech you therefore, brethren . . . to present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Rom. xii. 1). We ought then to offer our conduct as a holy sacrifice to Him. There is also in the New Testament the idea that the new altar, as Hatch says, is that of human need. We give to God in giving to our brother-man. All service that alleviates human suffering, emancipates the enslaved, saves the children, is a sacrifice. "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

¶ Love has only one measure—its willingness to sacrifice itself. Love's general law is to seek to do good to others, by service, toil, suffering, both passively and actively. What does a mother endure for her child? Sleepless nights, without food, as she soothes the suffering of her little one and wins back life and health to the child by the offering and sacrifice of her own health and life. What of Father Damien, and others like him, who became lepers to save lepers? Sister Kate Marsden, too? They give themselves to remove the curse of leprosy, or at least to remove the darker curse of leprosy. It is love undertaking on another's behalf, by means of sacrifice, to win for them some good. There is nothing great and noble and praiseworthy in the world, but this principle of love is at the root of it.[1]

(3) *The priest is a mediator* representing God before men, and representing men before God. As our Lord Jesus Christ represents God to men, and we, being one with Him, also stand as being, in a secondary sense, God's representatives, so He is perfect man, and in Him the whole of our race is summed up, and we, after a partial manner, may also appear in God's sight on behalf of our fellow-men. They do not need to approach God through us, yet we can voice their wants even when they themselves do not know them. We cannot bear the burden of a world's sin, under which our Saviour bowed, but we can by our prayer and intercession — and that, rightly understood, is no light burden—make the silence of our fellows articulate at the throne of grace.

¶ Man is sometimes spoken of as a priest in relation to nature; as George Herbert puts it—

[1] *John Brown Paton*, by his Son (1914), 372.

Man is the world's high-priest: he doth present
The sacrifice for all; while they below
Unto the service mutter an assent,
Such as springs use that fall, and winds that blow.

But this is a poet's graceful fancy. The truth of the text lies in the relation of the Christian to God and his fellow-men. There is no human priest in Christianity to come between God and any single human heart; the only Mediator is He who is Son of God and Son of Man, a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Yet every Christian is to be a priest unto God, as himself offering spiritual sacrifices and helping to interpret God-in-Christ to man and to bring men to the God and Father whom he has learned to love and serve.[1]

¶ The whole function of Priesthood was, on Christmas morning, at once and for ever gathered into His Person who was born at Bethlehem; and thenceforward, all who are united with Him, and who with Him make sacrifice of themselves; that is to say, all members of the Invisible Church become, at the instant of their conversion, Priests; and are so called in 1 Peter ii. 5 and Rev. i. 6, and xx. 6, where, observe, there is no possibility of limiting the expression to the Clergy; the conditions of Priesthood being simply having been loved by Christ, and washed in His blood.[2]

Priests, priests,—there's no such name!—God's own, except
Ye take most vainly. Through heaven's lifted gate
The priestly ephod in sole glory swept,
When Christ ascended, entered in, and sate
(With victor face sublimely overwept)
At Deity's right hand, to mediate
He alone, He for ever. On His breast
The Urim and the Thummim, fed with fire
From the full Godhead, flicker with the unrest
Of human, pitiful heartbeats. Come up higher,
All Christians! Levi's tribe is dispossest.[3]

[1] W. T. Davison, *Strength for the Way*, 33.
[2] Ruskin, *The Construction of Sheepfolds*, § 15 (*Works*, xii. 537).
[3] E. B. Browning, *Casa Guida Windows*.

The Second Advent.

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The Second Advent.

Behold he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.—Rev. i. 7.

No one can study the New Testament without feeling that the thought of Christ's Return was everywhere present and powerful in the first age. In the Gospels and in the Apocalypse, in the Acts and in the Epistles, the same hope is the subject of promise, of exhortation, of vision. It would perhaps be impossible to find any other special doctrine of Christianity which is not only affirmed, but affirmed in the same language, by St. Paul and St. James, by St. Peter and St. John. The Return of Christ to judgment was the subject on which St. Peter spoke when the Jewish multitude were astonished at the first apostolic miracle; it was the subject on which St. Paul spoke when he first passed over into Macedonia and his enemies accused him of preaching "another king than Cæsar." It seems to rise uppermost in the minds of the Apostles when they are themselves most deeply moved and when they wish to move others most deeply. It is, as they declare it, the sufficient motive for patience in affliction and the end of expectation in the presence of triumphant evil. And more than this: the hope of Christ's Return was not only universal in the first age; it was instant. From Jerusalem and Corinth the same voice came that "the time was at hand," even as when the Baptist heralded Christ's ministry. The dawn of an endless day was held to be already breaking after a weary night; and while St. Paul reproved the error of those at Thessalonica who neglected the certain duties of life that they might, as they fancied, watch better the spread of the heavenly glory, he confirmed the truth which they had misinterpreted. With us it is far otherwise. A few enthusiasts from time to time bring the thought of Christ's Return into prominence, but for the most part it has

little influence upon our hearts and minds. We acknowledge generally, in a vague manner, that we shall severally render an account of our doings, but we do not look beyond this either in hope or in fear to any manifestation of judgment in the world.

¶ One of Dr. Bonar's reminiscences of the people at Jedburgh was a story of a half-witted man whom he used to visit. This poor man had found Christ and had learned to rejoice in the thought of His return to earth. He went to Edinburgh on a visit, and came home much dissatisfied with the ministers. When asked why, he said, "Oh, they a' flee (fly) wi' ae (one) wing!" They preached Christ's First, but not His Second, Coming.[1]

I.

"He cometh."

1. The Lord shall come! This is the burden of this last book of Scripture. It was the burden of the Old Testament; for Enoch's prophecy runs through all its books,—"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints." It is the burden of the New Testament; for both the Master and His Apostles give out the same solemn utterance,—"Behold he cometh;" and the Church in the early ages took up the subject as of profoundest and most pressing interest, "looking for that blessed hope." In that coming, the manifestation of Christ, all things, our actions and ourselves, shall be seen as they are, seen by ourselves and seen by others. Then the whole course of life, the life of creation, of humanity, of men, will be laid open, and that vision will be a judgment beyond controversy and beyond appeal.

¶ Dr. Bonar was absorbed from first to last in the faith and hope of the Second Advent. Wherever we open the New Testament, we find it thrilling to the heat and joy of that manifestation and coming of the Lord when we shall see Him as He is. Edward Irving, with all his errors, did one thing. He revived for his generation the Parousia as the definite hope of the Church which witnesses to the Lord's death till He come. Dr. Nansen has recently told us what science has to say about the end of the world. He tells that the end will take place after millions of years, when the sun has been cooled. Life will then have to cope with greater and greater difficulties of existence, until it

[1] *Reminiscences of Andrew A. Bonar*, 4.

finally and entirely disappears. The possibilities of existence will become gradually less and less favourable for the complicated and highly developed animals, whilst the simple low organisms will probably be those that will live longest until even they disappear. But the faith of the Church is that the Christ who once offered Himself in our nature as the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, satisfaction, and oblation for the sins of the whole world will come again. The Christ who comes will be the Christ who departed, and His coming will be in like manner as the disciples saw Him go, visible, corporeal, local. We, according to His promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. I venture to think it a great weakness of our teaching that so little is said about the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Saviour. Meanwhile, if He returns not in our lifetime, we know that we are dying people, all of us; that there are before us death, judgment, and eternity. So let us offer the prayer:

Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that great day;
O wash me in Thy precious blood,
And take my sins away.[1]

2. No truth, therefore, ought to be more frequently proclaimed, next to the first coming of the Lord, than His second coming; and we cannot thoroughly set forth all the ends and bearings of the first advent if we forget the second. At the Lord's Supper, there is no discerning the Lord's body unless we discern His first coming; there is no drinking His cup to its fulness, unless we also hear Him say, "Until I come." We must look forward, as well as backward. We must look to Him on the cross and on the throne. We must vividly realize that He who has once come is coming yet again, or else our testimony will be marred and one-sided. The great advent may be near, or it may be far off. It may come while things remain as they are, or not till after great changes. But, come when it may, it will come surely. Of that our Lord has warned us. We know not, and we are not to know, when; but come it will. Those who are then living will see it; and those who are in the graves will awake to see it. We know not of which number we shall be. But this we do know, that see Him we shall, and that either to our unspeakable joy or to our shame and terror and despair.

[1] W. R. Nicoll, in *Memories of Dr. Horatius Bonar*, 109.

¶ These were the days of warm and even bitter discussion relative to "The Lord's Second Coming." Pre-millennialists and post-millennialists could scarcely come together for prophetical Bible study without sharp controversy on the subject. Since Dr. Pierson's views had undergone a change, through his interviews with George Müller and his later Bible studies, he held the decided and unyielding conviction that Christians must be ready and looking for the return of the Lord at any moment. He was not prepared, nor did he think it right, to prophesy as to dates, "since," he said, "the only date given for the Lord's return is 'In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.'" He believed that the world was to be "evangelized" but not necessarily converted before the Lord should come.[1]

3. The text speaks of Christ's coming "with the clouds"—an expression suggestive of glory and power. Of all natural objects that awaken the sense of awe none can rival for power, mountains, clouds, and sea. But clouds combine, in a measure, the resources of sea and mountains; smoothed out at dawn or sunset, twisted into strange contortions by the storm, they rival the solemnity of mountains in their vast proportions, and imitate in their changeful movements the beating of the waves. Black as forces of evil, bright with the smile of opening day, floating on the surface of an azure heaven, or piled in giant waves above the mountains with a look of doom—everywhere they give the sense of thinly veiled depths of mystery yet to be revealed, and of the wrath and power of God against sin.

¶ Each common cloud in this our cloudy climate may serve to remind us of the cloud of the Ascension, and of the clouds of the second Advent. Also of that great cloud of witnesses who already compass us about, who one day will hear our doom pronounced; who perhaps will then for the moment become as nothing to us when we stand face to face with Christ our Judge: "At the brightness of His presence His clouds removed."[2]

¶ Every one knows the history of Raphael's "Madonna di San Sisto," at Dresden. Its background is composed of clouds. For many years the picture, begrimed with dirt, remained uncleaned, and the background of clouds looked dark and threatening; when the picture was cleaned and carefully examined, it was discovered that the supposed clouds were not dark atmospheric clouds but

[1] *Arthur T. Pierson: A Biography*, by his Son, 185.
[2] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 20.

multitudes of angel faces luminously massed together. It is ever thus. His clouds are ministering spirits, angel faces; the heavy masses of Earth's dust, which look so dark and unangelic, are His veil; in them He comes, seeking the heart, striving to eradicate selfishness, to quench passion, to melt obstinacy, to wean from earthly things.[1]

II.

"Every eye shall see him."

1. When Christ came before, He came to an obscure quarter of the world, and if all of that land had assembled to see Him, the number would have been but moderate; but, in fact, only Mary and Joseph were present, with perhaps one or two attendants; and the shepherds came to look, and the wise men brought their gifts; and that was all. Few were the eyes that saw Him then. But when He comes again "every eye shall see him," as every man sees the sun each day. Jesus said to the high priest, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. xxvi. 64). Caiaphas will see Him, and the scribes and elders—those who mocked Him, and smote Him, and spit upon Him; the people who cried "Crucify him! . . . not this man, but Barabbas"; Pilate, who, against his conscience, condemned Him; the penitent thief, and the impenitent; all the penitent and all the impenitent; those who have crucified Him afresh by their sins, and those who have served and glorified Him; all who have ever lived, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the old and the young; *all* shall see Him, at one and the same moment, all together; the eyes of the blind shall be opened to see Him, all that are in the graves shall see Him, and all who lie in the depths of the sea.

¶ "And every eye shall see him"—All impelled in one direction, all looking in one direction. Even a very small crowd doing the same thing at the same instant has a thrilling, awful power; as once when I saw the chorus of a numerous orchestra turn over their music-sheets at the same moment, it brought before me the Day of Judgment.[2]

¶ Earth must fade away from our eyes, and we must anticipate

[1] B. Wilberforce, *New (?) Theology*, 243.

[2] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 20.

that great and solemn truth, which we shall not fully understand till we stand before God in judgment, that to us there are but two beings in the whole world, God and ourselves. The sympathy of others, the pleasant voice, the glad eye, the smiling countenance, the thrilling heart, which at present are our very life, all will be away from us, when Christ comes in judgment. Every one will have to think of himself. Every eye shall see *Him*; every heart will be full of *Him*. He will speak to every one; and every one will be rendering to Him his own account.[1]

2. There is consolation in the thought—"Every eye shall see him." It is a glorious promise, for, whether in this life or in the life to come, the law is eternal, that only the sanctified can see the Holy One, only "the pure in heart shall see God,"—yet "every eye *shall* see him." It is the infinite thirst of every awakened soul, the supreme consummation awaiting the noblest spirits who have passed through earth's education. Every inarticulate upward straining of the spirit that we have been unable to interpret has been the inner eye feeling for Him. Some can interpret it. Faraday, when asked by Acland his conception of after-death consciousness, cried out, "I shall see Him, and that will be enough for me." Augustine cried out, "O let me see Thee; and if to see Thee is to die, let me die that I may see Thee."

¶ I remember a man born blind who loved our Lord most intensely, and he was wont to glory in this, that his eyes had been reserved for his Lord. Said he, "The first whom I shall ever see will be the Son of man in His glory."[2]

¶ "Every eye shall see him." Every eye; the eye of every living man, whoever he is. None will be able to prevent it. The voice of the trumpet, the brightness of the flame, shall direct all eyes to Him, shall fix all eyes upon Him. Be it ever so busy an eye, or ever so vain an eye, whatever employment, whatever amusement it had the moment before, will then no longer be able to employ it, or to amuse it. The eye will be lifted up to Christ, and will no more look down upon money, upon books, upon land, upon houses, upon gardens. Alas! these things will then all pass away in a moment; and not the eyes of the living alone, but also all the eyes that have ever beheld the sun, though but for a moment: the eyes of all the sleeping dead will be awakened and opened. The eyes of saints and sinners of former generations. Your eyes and mine. O awful thought! Blessed

[1] J. H. Newman. [2] C. H. Spurgeon.

Jesus! May we not see Thee as through tears; may we not then tremble at the sight![1]

III.

"And they which pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him."

1. With what different feelings shall men see Christ on the last great day! Some rejoicing, others mourning: some with hallelujahs, others with cries of despair. "All tribes of the earth shall mourn over him." Some of every generation and every tribe; so many, that it is said "*all.*" Yet not every individual. Of every generation and tribe, some will see Him with joy. This was the hope with which He cheered His disciples, sorrowing at His going: "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 3); "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John xvi. 22). And this was the comfort the angels gave to those who saw Him ascend out of their sight: "This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." To them, as to all His disciples, the Lord's return was and is an object, not of dread, but of joyful hope.

This same great coming, then, which "every eye shall see," is an object of dread to some, of joy unspeakable to others. When they see the Lord appear, some will wail in terror and despair, others will rejoice "with joy unspeakable, and full of glory"; and even now, while some "love his appearing," others are terrified at the thought. Whence arises this vast difference? From the vast difference in their present state with regard to Him who will come. As men (those at least to whom the gospel has come) feel towards Christ Himself, so do they feel with regard to His coming, and so will they feel when they see Him appear. They who love Him love to think of His appearing, and will rejoice to see Him; they who love Him not, and have no saving faith in Him, now fear to think of His coming, and will then call on the rocks to cover them.

¶ "All kindreds of the earth shall *wail*" is the reading of the Authorized Version. I cannot put into English the full meaning of that most expressive word, "wail." Sound it at length, and

[1] Philip Doddridge.

it conveys its own meaning. It is as when men wring their hands and burst out into a loud cry; or as when Eastern women, in their anguish, rend their garments, and lift up their voices with the most mournful notes. "All kindreds of the earth shall wail;" wail as a mother laments over her dead child; wail as a man might wail who found himself hopelessly imprisoned and doomed to die. Such will be the hopeless grief of all the kindreds of the earth at the sight of Christ in the clouds: if they remain impenitent, they shall not be able to be silent; they shall not be able to repress or conceal their anguish.[1]

2. "They which pierced him" are by no means a few. Who have pierced Christ? The Roman soldier who thrust his spear into the Messiah's side is not the only one. They that once professed to love Christ and have gone back to the world; they that speak against the Christ whom once they professed to love; they whose inconsistent lives have brought dishonour upon the sacred name of Jesus; they who refused His love, stifled their consciences, and rejected His rebukes; they who scorn the love and mercy offered by the Saviour—all these may be said to have pierced Him.

¶ The words "they which pierced him" are taken from Zech. xii. 10. Both here and in John xix. 37 the New Testament writer does not adopt, as usual, the Septuagint reading, which runs, "because they have mocked me" but "whom they have pierced." This, as Alford remarks, is almost a demonstration of the common authorship of the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel. This and John xix. 37 are the only places in the New Testament where this prophecy is alluded to.[2]

Ah, Lord, we all have pierced Thee: wilt Thou be
  Wroth with us all to slay us all?
Nay, Lord, be this thing far from Thee and me:
  By whom should we arise, for we are small,
By whom if not by Thee?

Lord, if of us who pierced Thee Thou spare one,
  Spare yet one more to love Thy Face,
And yet another of poor souls undone,
  Another, and another—God of grace,
Let mercy overrun.[3]

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.
[2] M. F. Sadler, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, 7.
[3] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poetical Works*, 137.

IV.

"Even so, Amen."

1. "This same Jesus shall come." These words of the angel to the disciples after the Ascension are words of comfort to those who believe. He "who loved me, and gave himself for me," is He who will come in glory; the same Jesus as went about doing good, and died to redeem us by His blood; as full of grace and love as ever, unchangeably the same. It is our Saviour who will come with clouds, and whose coming the Apostle hails in the closing words of the text, "Even so, Amen." The first of these words is Greek, "Yes"; the second Hebrew, "So be it"; both together form the fullest expression that could be given of the certainty and truth of what is stated, and the deep longing of heart for the fulfilment of the prediction. Here are all St. John's innermost desires summed up and spoken out. What earnestness, what vehemence, what longing, are expressed in this double Amen! It is the amen of faith, and hope, and joy. It is the amen of a weary, heart-broken exile. It is the amen of a saint left on earth long behind his fellow-saints, and sighing for the promised rest when the great Rest-giver comes. It is the Church's amen; her vehement desire for the day of meeting.

¶ "Even so, Amen."—"Amen" alone closed the doxology (ver. 6), but here where judgment is the theme, St. John doubles his assent. A lesson of adhesion to the revealed Will of God, be that Will what it may: a foreshadowing of the perfected will and mind of all saints at the separating right and left of the final division: an example of the conformity we must now pray and strive after: "Even so, Amen."[1]

¶ The little word *Amen* means, truly, verily, certainly; and it is a word of firm, heartfelt faith: as if thou saidst, "O God and Father, those things for which I have prayed I doubt not; they are surely true and will come to pass, not because I have prayed for them, but because Thou hast commanded me to ask for them, and hast surely promised; and I am convinced that Thou art indeed God, and canst not lie. And, therefore, not because of the worthiness of my prayer, but because of the certainty of Thy

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 23.

promise, I do firmly believe it, and I have no doubt that an Amen will come out of it, and it will be an Amen."[1]

2. Thus the Book of Revelation calls the Church to fix her eyes more intently upon her true hope. For what is that hope? Is it not the hope of the revelation of her Lord in the glory that belongs to Him? No hope springs so eternal in the Christian breast. It was that of the early Church, as she believed that He whom she had loved while He was on earth would return to perfect the happiness of His redeemed. It ought not less to be our hope now. "Watching for it, waiting for it, being patient unto it, groaning without it, looking for it, hasting unto it, loving it—these are the phrases which Scripture uses concerning the day of God." And surely it may well use them; for what in comparison with the prospect of such a day is every other anticipation of the future?

¶ In a letter to Lady Kinloch he wrote: "The return of the Lord Jesus, and our being glorified together with Him (if so be that we suffer with Him), this true and lively hope seems to me like a star, which is not seen in the garish light of prosperity and a smooth course, but only in the stillness of sorrow, or at least of a chastened, crucified condition. I think this is one reason why the Church lost this hope, after the first ages of martyrdom, and why now-a-days it so often degenerates into a mere sentimental speculation,—a pious *Zeitvertreib*."[2]

¶ Writing to his sister Mrs. Julius Hare, he says: "The words of the Apostle, 'Looking for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,' have seemed to me the only words that gave me any glimpse into the future state, or into the use which we are to make of it, in urging ourselves and others to fight. I think the Millenarians are altogether right, and have done an infinite service to the Church, in fixing our minds upon these words, and so turning them away from the expectations of mere personal felicity apart from the establishment of Christ's kingdom; from the notion of Heaven which makes us indifferent to the future condition of the earth. I think they have done good also, in urging the hope of Christ's coming, as a duty upon the Church, and in denouncing the want of it as a sin."[3]

¶ The whole Bible was to him bright with the promise of the

[1] Luther, *Commentary on the Lord's Prayer*.
[2] G. Carlyle, *A Memoir of Adolph Saphir*, 216.
[3] *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, ii. 243.

Lord's Return, and this expectation gave joy and hopefulness to his whole life. Sorrow and bereavement made him think of the glorious time when "death shall have become resurrection"; pain and suffering reminded him of the "new heavens and the new earth" yet to come. "Are you content," he writes to a friend, "with the Lord's gracious letter to you when you might rather be wearying for Himself? I know that 'this same Jesus' is as precious to you as to any of us, but when will you be 'a man of Galilee, gazing up into heaven'?" To another friend he writes: "Are you loving Christ's appearing and His kingdom? If not, He hath somewhat against thee." . . . "Some Christians make a great mistake. They think that because Christ said it was expedient that He should go away, therefore it is expedient that He should *stay* away! He went away to present His finished work to the Father, but He must come back again."

"I find the thought of Christ's Coming," he said, "very helpful in keeping me awake. Those who are waiting for His appearing will get a special blessing. Perhaps they will get nearer His Person. I sometimes hope it will be so, and that He will beckon me nearer to Him if I am waiting for Him; just as at a meeting, you often see one beckoned to come up to the platform nearer the speakers."

At a meeting in Philadelphia in 1881, to bid him farewell, the chairman—the late George Stewart—closed his address by saying that "the Lord, the Righteous Judge, would give to His dear servant a crown of righteousness at the great day." He sat down, and on rising to reply, Dr. Bonar said, "'And not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing'"[1]

[1] *Reminiscences of Andrew A. Bonar*, 148.

The Lord's Day.

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The Lord's Day.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.—Rev. i. 10.

1. The religious importance of the first day of the week arose from the conviction that Christ had risen from the dead on that day. The conviction is certainly found to exist very early in the Church, and we can hardly resist the conclusion that its origin must be sought in the fact that, in some mode which we shall never exactly understand, it was on "the first day of the week" that Christ so manifested Himself to His Apostles as to create in them the assurance of His being actually alive among them in the fulness of personal life. The phrase of the Apocalypse, then, is not hard of explanation. The first day of the week was known as "the Lord's Day," because in truth the Lord had then made clear His title to the lordship He claimed. It was on that day, so the Church believed, that the Son of Man, "who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh," was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead." It was as an "Easter Day in every week" that the first day of the week first secured its religious importance.

The Church had no definite command from the Lord to change the date of its rest-day, nor indeed did the Church do that all at once; it was not possible. But the first day of the week, the day on which He rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples, the day, too, on which the Holy Spirit came, the Church has, by a sort of inspired instinct, set apart to Christian fellowship, meetings for prayer and worship, and the celebration of the Holy Supper. Gradually it took the place of the seventh day as the day of rest.

There is no historical fact that enjoys better proof than this—that the observance of the day by intermission of toil and by special religious exercises was the constant practice of the Christian

Church from the days of the Apostles. The civil laws, when the secular arm was extended to the Church, tell the same tale. Constantine forbade lawsuits on this day: the courts were to be closed. The Valentians, elder and younger, follow. Theodosius enacts that all Sundays in the year be days of vacation from all business of the law whatsoever.

Secular business of a more private kind was also strictly forbidden, though ploughing and harvesting were at first excepted from the prohibition. Christian soldiers were required to attend church. And what is of special interest, in view of present-day tendencies, no public games or shows or frivolous recreations were allowed by law on the Lord's Day.

¶ From the very beginning the English people believed that this was a day apart, a day given of God, a day in which men could recover their connection with spiritual things, and refresh their hearts by waiting upon the invisible God. Perhaps no one has described the English Sunday better than the Royalist poet, George Herbert:

> Sundays the pillars are
> On which heav'n's palace arched lies;
> The other days fill up the spare
> And hollow room with vanities:
> They are the fruitful beds and borders
> In God's rich garden; that is bare
> Which parts their ranks and orders.

2. The spirit of man is tidal and "the soul wins its victories as the sea wins hers." The tides of the spirit are known to us all —the great reactions, the swinging tides of feeling, interest, and energy. These are from above, coming down upon us, unlike the pedestrian guides of common sense and principle which direct us evenly on our way. This does not apply merely to the ebb and flow of sweet or tender feeling, though it includes that also. Rather one thinks of the occasional heightening of life all round, the intensification of its powers in moments when it "means intensely, and means good." Now this occasional quality of human nature is the explanation of the common delight in the observance of special days. Birthdays and other anniversaries, the return of friends from afar, the festivals commemorating national and religious events, are all of them times of spiritual rising tide. It

is fitting to give them their opportunity, to set time apart, and to forbid encroaching duties.

¶ Dr. Haegler, in his *Expenditure and Repair of Vital Force*, says that the night succeeding a day's labour does not afford a complete recuperation of zig-zag lines. The Monday line shows a man at his maximum strength. With each succeeding day the line is shortened a little. On Tuesday morning the workman, refreshed by sleep, has regained most of his lost energy, but not all. On Wednesday the line is shorter still, that is, there is a larger margin of loss. On Thursday and Friday and Saturday the lines are shortened more and more. On Saturday night the minimum of strength is reached. Now comes Sunday. If the workman observes it, he regains his full normal vigour and begins again where he began a week ago. If he refuses to observe it, and keeps on doing so, he will never regain his normal standard of vital force, but will suffer a constant drain and decline until he ends in physical breakdown. Thus it appears as a scientific fact that the man who habitually refuses to rest on Sunday is living on his reserve. He is literally working himself to death.

3. The need for the observance of set days is embedded in human nature. Eternal as the constitution of the soul of man is the necessity for the existence of a day of rest. And on this ground alone can we find an impregnable defence of the *proportion* one day in seven. The seventh being altered to the first, one might ask why one in seven might not be altered to one in ten. The thing has been tried; and by the necessities of human nature the change has been found pernicious. One day in ten, prescribed by revolutionary France, was actually pronounced by physiologists insufficient. So that we begin to find that, in a deeper sense than we at first suspected, "the sabbath was made for man." Even in the contrivance of one day in seven, it was arranged by unerring wisdom. Just because the Sabbath was made for man, and not because man was ordained to keep the Sabbath-day, we cannot tamper even with the iota, one day in seven.

¶ Professor Hodge of Clark University, Worcester, Mass., demonstrated in his biological laboratory that the nerve cells are not fully restored from a day's wear by a night's rest, and that they need to be fully restored every few days, and that such perfect restoration cannot be accomplished with less than thirty to thirty-six hours of continuous rest, which means a rest-day

added to the adjoining two nights, a rest such as the Sabbath regularly affords.

¶ "I beg and pray of you," said Dolly Winthrop, "to leave off weaving of a Sunday, for it's bad for soul and body—and the money as comes i' that way 'ull be a bad bed to lie down on at the last, if it doesn't fly away, nobody knows where, like the white frost. And you'll excuse me being that free with you, Master Marner, for I wish you well—I do."[1]

¶ I certainly do feel by experience the eternal obligation because of the eternal necessity of the Sabbath. The soul withers without it; it thrives in proportion to the fidelity of its observance. Nay, I even believe the stern rigour of the Puritan Sabbath had a grand effect upon the soul. Fancy a man thrown in upon himself, with no permitted music, nor relaxation, nor literature, nor secular conversation—nothing but his Bible, his own soul and God's silence! What hearts of iron this system must have made. How different from our stuffed-arm-chair religion and "gospel of comfort!" as if to be made comfortable were the great end of religion. I am persuaded, however, that the Sabbath must rest not on an enactment, but on the necessities of human nature. It is necessary not because it is commanded; but it is commanded because it is necessary. If the Bible says, "Eat the herb of the field," sustenance does not become a duty in consequence of the enactment, but the enactment is only a statement of the law of human nature. And so with the Sabbath, and this appears to be a truer and far more impregnable base to place it on. You cannot base it on a law; but you can show that the law was based on an eternal fitness. There I think it never can be dislodged.[2]

¶ Sunday is a quiet hollow, scooped out of the windy hill of the week.[3]

4. To observe a day in any worthy sense, one must enter into its spirit. The true worth of Sunday to us all depends on our coming to find in it the opportunity, the hope, the means of some such rising above this world as that of which St. John speaks; some approach towards that entrance among things eternal which he links with the Lord's Day. Yes, whatever may be our place and work in life, our share in its pleasures and hardships and interests and sorrows, if Sunday is to mean more and not less to us as the years go by, we must be using it to learn a little more of

[1] George Eliot, *Silas Marner*.
[2] *Life and Letters of the Rev. F. W. Robertson*, 211.
[3] George MacDonald.

our duty, and of our need, of ourselves, as God sees us, and, above all, of His will, His ways, His mercy, and His justice.

As is the Spirit, so is the Lord's Day. The one is proportionate to the other. You cannot make any day the Lord's Day for a man who has no Lord. You cannot make any day a Sabbath, if a man has no Sabbath in him. True, our Saviour said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath," but then the Sabbath which is made for the man must be made in the man, and by him. Forced rest is not restful. The man whose day is only an outer quiet can have no inner peace. There is no dreariness so dreadful as the dreariness of a period of loneliness, of solitude, to a man who fears his own society and pants for the distraction that comes from the society of other men. Hence there can be no Lord's Day for any man unless he be in the Spirit, and just in proportion as he is in it will the day be to him rich with a message from heaven, great with the grace of God.

¶ We all remember times when we have gone to our work all out of tune, and unable to fix the mind on what we had to do, half dead, as it were, to the demand; to find, as the time went on, that things were slipping through our hands to no sort of purpose; and when night came we had to say sadly, with the emperor, "I have lost a day." We have lost the day, because we have not caught its spirit. But on another day we have found we were so clear of head and sure of hand that we have done the work of two men, and come out all aglow with the spirit which has borne us as on the wings of eagles.

I go into my study, and become absorbed in a book. The author may be dead and gone this thousand years, and no other trace of him remain on the earth; but if he has hidden his spirit in that book, and I can find it, he opens his heart to me, and I open mine to him, and find myself touched as he was touched when he wrote that chapter. I cannot help the tears in my eyes as I read, any more than he could help them when he wrote, or the strong throb of the heart, or the ripple of laughter. I see what he saw in human homes and human lives, catch the vision he had of the open heavens, or the lurid flame and smoke. I am in the spirit of this master of my morning, and his spirit is in me; my senses are simply the messengers between his soul and mine. I seem to hear the voice when I read they used to hear who knew the writer. There is a spell on me which makes time and place of no account, and I wonder how my morning has slipped away.[1]

[1] R. Collyer, *The Joy of Youth*, 53.

5. When we are in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, the gates of a new world open to us. The seer in Patmos saw visions and heard the sound of trumpets. The tradition is that he was banished to Patmos, to work in the mines there, because he was of the outcast and branded Christian sect; and if this is the truth, we cannot doubt that his overseers would keep a stern hand on him, and allow no day for rest, or time for worship. He would have to dig and delve his full stint, like the slave he was, until the time came to lay down his pick and go to his hovel. Or, if it was known among his keepers that this day was more sacred to him than any other in the week, they would mark it for him, it may be, with the rubric of a deeper misery.

Sunday was not a holiday in the mines, but the spirit of this redeemed man is free, and he has access to the spiritual world. While his feet and hands toil at their dreary tasks, he passes into an ecstatic state, suspending his connexion with this material world, and leading him into the other land, unseen of any eyes but his. In this exalted state the boundaries of both time and space are thrown down, and he moves free in a larger world. He is back again in the morning light of the day of Christ's rising. Again he runs to the empty tomb with Peter; again the woman whom they have left solitary by that empty tomb comes and tells them what she has seen; and again, amid the evening shadows, he himself hears the words, "Peace be unto you." Similarly he escapes from the narrow confines of the island, and shares the life of the infant Church scattered along the coast-lines of the Great Sea. He is their brother and companion, both in the tribulation and in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ; he is with them both in darkness and in glory. He is with them, too, in that patience of the saints which both the tribulation and the Kingdom have taught them—that wonderful patience of the Early Church, which had learned to be patient with life, both in its present trial and in its deferred hope.

¶ Principal Alexander Whyte, in giving a New Year exhortation in 1913, testified: "If my experience of the Lord's Day is of any value or any interest to any of you—well, here it is. I have had a long lifetime's experience of, on the whole, a somewhat scrupulously kept Lord's Day. And that day, so kept, has been to me one of my chief blessings in a life full of such blessings. I can testify, and that with the most entire integrity, that from my

childhood down to this hour, I have greatly loved and greatly valued the seclusion, and the silence, and the rest, and especially the reading proper to the Lord's Day. And at the end of a long life, I look back and bless God for those who brought me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord's Day. Especially do I recall my Lord's Day reading before my teens, and during them and after them. Speak for yourselves. But it would ill become me and it would be very unsafe for me if I were to be silent about the Scottish Sabbath, or were I to do less than all that in me lies to secure such a Sabbath to my own household and to yours."

¶ Alexander M'Laren's upbringing would now be called rigidly Puritanic, but instead of its having left on his mind any unhappy impression, all through life it was recalled with feelings of gratitude and pleasure. As for "Sabbath day" employments, no recollections were more lovingly dwelt on than their "unvarying round." "When I was a boy," he would say, "I was taken regularly to two services long before I was old enough to listen attentively to the sermon, but no remembrance of wishing the service to be over dwells in my memory. There was no evening service in those days. Parents were expected to teach their children then, and they *did*. In my father's house, after an extra good tea, the lesson began, very often with the repetition of the second chapter of Ephesians, each member of the family, including father and mother, repeating one verse. I, as youngest, brought up the rear. I knew nothing of 'dreary Sundays,' so often spoken of as being the rule in Scotland, especially long ago."[1]

O day to sweet religious thought
So wisely set apart,
Back to the silent strength of life
Help thou my wavering heart.
Nor let the obtrusive lies of sense
My meditations draw
From the composed, majestic realm
Of everlasting law.
I know these outward forms, wherein
So much my hopes I stay,
Are but the shadowy hints of that
Which cannot pass away.
That just outside the work-day path
By man's volition trod,
Lie the resistless issues of
The things ordained of God.[2]

[1] E. T. M'Laren, *Dr. M'Laren of Manchester*, 8.

[2] Alice Carey.

6. A set day kept in the spirit goes far to hallow all our days. Christianity is not satisfied with one-seventh of our time. It lays imperious claims to the whole, and in our settings forth of the duty of Sunday observance, we may not stoop in her name to contract for a fraction, on the understanding that the residuum may legitimately be given to the world. It behoves us to bate not one jot of the sacred claims of Him who "desires not ours but us" for His purchased possession. In abandoning Egypt, "not a hoof may be left behind." If "the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath," we will bear in mind that this appropriation on His part does not imply the ceding of His lordship over all our days. He is Lord over the Sabbath, to interpret it, to preside over it, to ennoble it by merging it in "the Lord's Day," breathing into it an air of liberty and love, necessarily unknown before, and thus making it the nearest resemblance to the eternal sabbatism. But, in doing this as its Lord, He claims the first-fruits as holy only that the lump also may be holy, thus to secure that—

> The week-days following in their train
> The fulness of the blessing gain,
> Till *all*, both resting and employ,
> Be one Lord's day of holy joy.

¶ It is said that those who serve a battery on the battlefield are obliged at intervals to pause in calm self-possession, heeding not the awful excitement, that the guns may cool; yes, and that the smoke may lift to enable them to take accurate aim; and further that they may replenish their stores of ammunition. And so no Christian can truly fight the battle of the week without the quiet Sabbath to cool his guns, to lift off earth-lowering shadows, and to replenish his stores of strength from the secret place of the Most High.

¶ Through the week we go down into the valleys of care and shadow. Our Sabbaths should be hills of light and joy in God's presence; and so, as time rolls by, we shall go on from mountain-top to mountain-top, till at last we catch the glory of the gate, and enter in, to go no more out forever.[1]

¶ A conscientious observance of the Sabbath brings a double blessing—release from the pressure of outward business, and escape from the tyranny of a man's own strength. All unvaried activity is apt to become engrossing; and the best thing a man can do, in order to preserve the completeness of a rich and well-

[1] H. W. Beecher.

balanced humanity, is to shake himself loose as frequently as possible from the domination of an exclusive current of thought. Nothing more dangerous or more hostile to moral health than what the Germans would call a pampered subjectivity.[1]

¶ Among the counsels written by Mr. Gladstone in 1854–1857 for the use of his eldest son is the following:—

"Sunday, the day of the Resurrection, is at once the emblem, the earnest, and the joy, of the renewed life: cherish it accordingly: grudge, and as it were resent, any intrusion of worldly thoughts or conversation: except upon real necessity, strive to shut out rigorously any worldly business: always view the devotion of the day to God, not as a yoke, but as a privilege; and be assured that if and so far as this view of it shall seem overstrained, the soul is not in its health."[2]

¶ The Lord's Day was observed as a remembrance of the Risen Lord. Its observance is a direct testimony to the greatest fact of the Gospel—the Resurrection; and to one of the chief doctrines of our faith—Christ's Divinity. If it was not His day, the day He had for ever purchased and baptised to Himself by rising again from the dead, Christianity had no foundation, forgiveness no security, "men's faith was vain, they were yet in their sins." . . . It was a point of personal loyalty to Christ to keep it. It was one great way of showing love and worship to their Redeemer. It was not a command so much as a privilege. They did not ask, "What shall I lose by keeping it?" but, "What may I not miss by neglecting it?" Is this our attitude to the Lord's Day? Is it a day of personal gratitude to One who gave Himself for me? You keep your friend's birthday, you think of him, send messages and presents to him. Have you no thoughts, words, gifts for Christ on His birthday? You ask for ways of showing Him love, of letting it be known that you are His. Here is one. Show Him your love by dedicating to Him this day.[3]

Still Sundays, rising o'er the world,
  Have never failed to bring their calm,
While from their tranquil wings unfurled,
  On the tired heart distilling balm,
A purer air bathes all the fields,
  A purer gold the generous sky;
The land a hallowed silence yields,
  All things in mute, glad worship lie,—

[1] *The Day Book of John Stuart Blackie*, 52.
[2] *Letters on Church and Religion of W. E. Gladstone*, ii. 414.
[3] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 56.

All, save where careless innocence
  In the great Presence sports and plays,
A wild bird whistles, or the wind
  Tosses the light snow from the sprays.

For life renews itself each week,
  Each Sunday seems to crown the year;
The fair earth rounds as fresh a cheek
  As though just made another sphere.
The shadowy film that sometimes breathes
  Between our thought and heaven disparts,
The quiet hour so brightly wreathes
  Its solemn peace about our hearts,
And Nature, whether sun or shower
  Caprices with her soaring days,
Rests conscious, in a happy sense,
  Of the wide smile that lights her ways.[1]

[1] Harriet P. Spofford, *Poems.*

Fear Not.

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Fear Not.

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.—Rev. i. 17, 18.

It seems strange to us that St. John, of all men in the world, should be afraid of Jesus. He had spent with the Master so many familiar days. He had talked with Him on the highways, and listened to His voice by the seashore. He had joined with the inner circle of the disciples on the transfiguration mount, in the death chamber of Jairus' house, and in the solemn stillness of Gethsemane by night. He had leaned on the Saviour's breast at supper; and when the cross was upreared on Calvary, he had taken from the Lord's dying lips the direction to receive Mary, the mother of Jesus, into his own home. And yet now, with all his experience of the Master, when the vision of the glorified Christ flashed upon him, he fell in consternation and terror at His feet.

But there was a great contrast between the vision which disclosed itself to the mind of St. John as he turned to see it and the memory which he cherished of the Lord as He was when he walked with Him in Palestine, or when he leaned on His breast at the supper table. St. John was the beloved disciple; he had been on terms of exceptional intimacy with his Master, but this was the risen and ascended Saviour; and so great was the contrast that he fell at His feet as one dead. He was overcome by the splendour of the vision; he was overwhelmed with the majesty of the Saviour. But it was the same loving Lord. "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of Hades."

¶ Martin Luther tells us himself that in his youth, while he

was still a devout member of the Roman Catholic Church, he was walking one day at Eisleben in his priest's robes following the procession of the Mass, when suddenly he was overcome by the thought that the Sacrament, carried by the vicar-general (Dr. Staupitz), was really Jesus Christ (as he then believed) in person. "A cold sweat," he says, "covered my body, and I believed myself dying of terror." Afterwards he confessed his fears to Dr. Staupitz, when the latter (one of the more enlightened of the old school) replied: "Your thoughts are not of Christ. Christ never alarms; He comforts." "These words," adds Luther, "filled me with joy, and were a great consolation to me."[1]

There are three great encouragements in the text—

I. Fear not to Live: "I am the Living one."

II. Fear not to Die: "I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore."

III. Fear not what comes after Death: "I have the keys of death and of Hades."

I.

Fear not to Live.

"I am the Living one."

1. The instinct of fear is deeply rooted in our nature. The thing that is unknown, yet known to be, will always be more or less formidable. When it is known as immeasurably greater than ourselves, and as having claims and making demands upon us, the more vaguely these are apprehended, the more room is there for anxiety; and when the conscience is not clear, this anxiety may well amount to terror. According to the nature of the mind which occupies itself with the idea of the Supreme, whether regarded as Maker or Ruler, will be the kind and degree of the terror. To this terror need belong no exalted ideas of God; those fear Him most who most imagine Him like their own evil selves, only beyond them in power, easily able to work His arbitrary will with them. The same consciousness of evil and of offence as gave rise to the bloody sacrifice is still at work in the minds of some who call themselves Christians. Naturally the first emotion

[1] J. Waddell.

of man towards the Being he calls God, but of whom he knows so little, is fear.

(1) Human experience is steeped in the fears brought by a *guilty conscience.* In all ages men have been terror-stricken as they thought of their sin. Even the most cultured peoples of paganism found no relief from such dread in turning to their gods. They did not think so well of their deities as to conceive of their pitying, helping, and saving. The favour of these monsters was to be won by pain, by suffering, and by surrender of what they loved the most; and so they hated their gods, and in their hearts bewailed the dire necessity of religion.

The ease of a guilty conscience is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Living One. It is in the touch of His right hand, in the hearing of the voice of Jesus, in the steadfast regard of what Jesus is, of what Jesus has done, and in the apprehension of the place that Jesus fills, and of the power that Jesus wields, that St. John is to find the ground of his fearlessness and steadfast confidence. This is one of the commonplaces of Christian experience. Not in ourselves, not in our attainments, not in our circumstances, not in anything that is ours, not even in any suffering, surrender, or sacrifice, can we find any sure ground of confidence or of deliverance. It is in Christ, and in Him alone, that peace and rest can be found. While we look at Him, while we steadfastly contemplate Him, and dwell on His perfection, on His work, on the gracious relation He condescends to bear to us, we are safe from inward perturbation and from hesitation and doubt.

(2) Men are oft overcome with fear as they face some great *crisis* in life. Again and again in life we are called to face emergencies, to take risks, to attempt the apparently impossible, to stand steadfast when confronted with opposition or trial or persecution. And the nobler the life is, the more numerous are the occasions on which this call comes to us. The true man, the man who feels the hand of the Almighty upon him, soon finds that life is full of episodes of this kind, often recurring with increasing frequency; that so far from becoming easier as it goes on, life often becomes more strenuous and more difficult; that the path which he is called to tread is no level highway, not even a graduated ascent to a predestined goal. It is an ascent indeed,

but not always gradual or continuous. At times he finds that it is broken by obstacles that have to be surmounted, by dangerous chasms that have to be bridged over, by slippery places in which it is difficult to find a foothold, by storm and by tempest and by darkness and by false guides and by open enemies.

Man trembles as he enters into the cloud of sorrow. He would rather be let alone. He would prefer that his money-making, or his pleasure, or his sin should not be interrupted by sickness or misfortune. In prosperity he feels strong; in adversity his heart fails him. It is just then, in his hour of need, that a strong right hand is laid upon him, and a Voice whispers in his ear: "I will in no wise fail thee." "Fear not." Sometimes, when an electric car is mounting a steep street, the power fails, and the car sticks fast with half the height still to be climbed. But on the Hill Difficulty, or on the mountain of trial, the power of Christ will never come short. The most trying seasons of life are the seasons when His grace is most magnified and His arm strongest to save.

(3) There are those who fear to live because they can look forward to nothing day by day and year by year but the small *dull round of toil*, and its endless reaches of flat, straight, unchanging road oppress their souls. Every cyclist knows that the dead level is far more wearying than a road where he must climb even steep hills now and then. The same muscles are unceasingly exercised; one misses the fresh breeze and the expansive outlook of the uplands; one loses the rest that is born of change. So life on the dead level is in danger of exhaustion. Nowhere does one more plainly need to hear the Master's voice saying: "Fear not." In the dead monotonies Christ reveals His power. He brings blessedness into the dull round of toil—the bitter weariness of chronic pain, the wearing anxieties of unchanging years. The desert can be made to blossom like the rose. What we are in soul will determine what we are in work. St. Paul's tent-making was never to him a monotonous desert. Let us try to catch the light of heaven, as we pursue our daily callings, whatever they may be, and we shall not fear to live through unchanging years.

¶ To every thoughtful man life has its responsibilities, its cares, and its possibilities. Shall I be able to live worthily, to make a fit

use of my opportunities? Shall I be able to live a rich, full, and gracious life, and be equal to the duties and the responsibilities which may devolve upon me? As we reflect on this, as we think out the situations and possibilities that open out to us as life proceeds and new horizons are disclosed, we feel the gracious power of this word, "Fear not to live; for I am the Living One." It is as if the Lord said, "Fear not to live; I share your life. Through Me you will be able to grasp the opportunities of life, you will rise to the height of your calling, and when duty calls you will be able to answer all its demands. You will be able to say, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'"[1]

2. Jesus, then, would have us meet every fear with the assurance that He is the Living One. "I am the first and the last, and the Living one"; not merely "the first and the last," not merely God at the beginning and God at the end, a Creator who put the world-machine into working order and who will step forward again into view at the last day to judge and punish and reward; but a God who is the Living One from first to last, the Giver and Sustainer of life, upholding—carrying along—all things by the word of His power. In this picture is portrayed with a lightning touch the eternal being and the eternal activity of God.

The close connexion of clauses suggests that the claim made in the expression "the Living one" means more than that He was alive. It means exactly what Jesus meant when, in the hearing of this same Apostle, He said upon earth, "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given"—strange paradox—"so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself"—a life which, considered in contrast to all the life of creatures, is underived, independent, self-feeding, and, considered in contrast with the life of the Father with whom that Son stands in ineffable and unbroken union, is bestowed. It is a paradox, but until we assume that we have sounded all the depths and climbed all the heights, and gone round the boundless boundaries of the circumference of that Divine nature, we have no business to say that it is impossible. And this is what the great words that echoed from heaven in the Apostle's hearing upon Patmos meant—the claim by the glorified Christ to possess absolute fontal life, and to be the Source of all creation, "in whom was life." He was not only "the Living one," but, as He Himself has said, He was "the Life."

[1] J. Iverach, *The Other Side of Greatness*, 139.

¶ Stevenson in his essays insists upon "being vital," as he calls it. Whatever else you are, he says, "be vital." He is encouraging and seeking to foster a brave and cheerful optimism. Do not trouble about death, says Stevenson, make the best of life. Now there is truth in that, and wisdom in it; and in all literature there is nothing more touching than the zest with which Stevenson determined to live, though in his sickly body he carried all his days the sentence of death in himself.[1]

II.

Fear not to Die.

"I was dead."

1. Man naturally fears death. Through fear of death men are all their lifetime subject to bondage. Though, under high motives and devotion to great causes, men have often subdued the fear of death, yet this fear is really a feeling common to all men. For men do not know what it is to die. It is an experience that is strange to men, and no one returns to tell others what it is to die. No traveller returns from the other land, and the experience of death lies before each man as new and as strange as if no one had ever had that experience. No one had ever before said, "I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore."

¶ It is said that George Morland, the painter, who killed himself by drinking, was possessed of such an unreasonable fear of darkness that, if the light happened to go out, he would creep towards the fire or the person next him, and he could never sleep without two lights in his room, lest one by some accident should be put out. That is something like the intolerable fear that most men have of death. They may reason themselves out of it, but the instinctive dread remains. Darwin used to go to the London Zoological Gardens, and, standing by the glass case that contained the cobra, put his forehead against the glass, while the cobra struck out at him. He was trying to conquer an instinctive fear; but though he knew that the glass was between, every time the creature struck out the scientist dodged. The same instinct makes most men fear the termination of earthly life. They may be firmly convinced in their minds that death is no enemy, but like Samuel Johnson they look forward with something very like

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of Grace*, 132.

terror to the "awful hour of their decease." And yet, when the time came for Johnson, he was able to face death with calmness and Christian fortitude.[1]

2. Christ does not teach us to make light of death; He says nothing to weaken a right sense of its awfulness and solemnity. Had we no shrinking from it, we should be lacking in the ordinary instincts of self-preservation and in due reverence for the sanctities of that human life which man may destroy but can never replace. Had we no native horror at the shedding of human blood, we might rush on suicide or murder, with the ferocious delight of savages or brute beasts. Yes! there is a rightful fear of death which is associated with a sense of the blessing and value of God-given life and in fullest accord with all the primary instincts of our being and well-being. We cannot suppose that this laudable fear is meant to be impaired by the gospel. No! the Lord's words here do not mean that we are to have nothing of that natural fear of death which is one of the strong safeguards of our own life and that of others. It is only the tyrannous, embarrassing, distracting, oppressive, mischievous terror that becomes simply a curse and a snare for all who come under its sway, to which this command "Fear not" applies, and from which it is part of the gracious Saviour's design to deliver us.

¶ That man must be a coward or a liar who could boast of never having felt a fear of death.[2]

3. Christ bids us master the fear of death by remembering that He passed through its dark portals. "I was dead." This announcement would remove all doubts from the mind of the Apostle as to the person addressing him. Whatever disparity between His present appearance and what He was when the Apostle saw and conversed with Him in the world, this declaration would remove all doubt. In the glorious One now in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and holding the seven stars in His right hand, and clothed with indescribable glory and majesty, he beholds the One whom he knew on earth as the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" — the One whom he saw arrayed in mock royal robes and the crown of thorns, the One whom he saw arraigned before an earthly tribunal and there

[1] J. Waddell. [2] The Duke of Wellington.

unjustly condemned, the One whom he saw in indescribable agony in the gloomy precincts of Gethsemane, the One whom he saw nailed to the accursed tree, and whose cry of bitter agony he heard while under the hiding of His Father's countenance, and whom at last he helped to commit to the dark and lonely grave. But what a contrast now! No longer the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; no longer the object of the hateful scorn and derision of the wicked; no longer the suffering Jesus, crushed with the burden of sins not His own—bearing the cross on which to lay down His life a ransom for many; no longer the seemingly conquered of death and the tenant of the grave, but the mighty conqueror risen to the possession of an endless life.

The actual words are, "I became dead"—a mysterious paradox, in which a most wonderful event is inserted, incorporated, into that eternity of being. In this short phrase He intimates the whole mystery of the Incarnation; but He presents just that aspect of it which sinful man, prone at His feet, most needs. He does not articulate the thought now of His blessed birth, or of His life, His speech, His labour, His example; there is nothing said here of Bethlehem, or of the years in Nazareth, or of the fair borders of the Lake with the furrowed fields, and the floating fishing-craft, and the listening multitudes upon the flowery slopes. It is all the cross; it is only and altogether the precious death and burial. "I became dead." We read that sentence in the light of the long Apocalypse, and what do we see within it? The shame and glory of the crucifixion, the atoning and redeeming blood, the sacrifice of the Lamb, the Lamb not of innocence only but of the altar—"as it had been slain."

"And behold, I am alive for evermore." This existence after death is special, and different. It is not a mere reassertion of what had been already included in His great word, "I am the Living one." It is something added. It is an assurance that in the continued life which has once passed through the experience of death there is something new, another sympathy, the only one which before could have been lacking with His brethren whose lot it is to die, and so a helpfulness to them which could not otherwise have been, even in His perfect love. This new life —the life which has conquered death by tasting it, which has enriched itself with a before unknown sympathy with men whose

lives are for ever tending towards and at last all going down into the darkness of the grave—this life stretches on and out for ever. It is to know no ending. So long as there are men living and dying, so long above them and around them there shall be the Christ, the God-man, who liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore.

Death and darkness get you packing,
Nothing now to man is lacking;
All your triumphs now are ended,
And what *Adam* marr'd is mended
Graves are beds now for the weary
Death a nap, to wake more merry.[1]

4. Because Christ lives, His people must live too. They cannot die. He made Himself one with His people, so much one with them that His life was their life, His dying their dying, and His work their work. The closeness of that union is illustrated on the other side as well. Their life is His life, their dying is His dying, and their work is His work. So the Apostle of the Gentiles says to the Colossian Christians, "Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." So close is the unity between Christ and His people that St. Paul could say, "If one died for all, then were all dead." If we trace this thought, as set forth in its fulness in Scripture, we find that the fear of death is overcome because the bitterness of death is past. It is no mere figure of speech which affirms that the Christian has died when he became a Christian. Nor is it only the case that when Christ died all His people died with Him. But the other side of the twofold experience is also true. Christ shares the death of His people. He is with them in the valley of the shadow of death. It is no lonely death that they die, when body and spirit part for the time. Christ is with them, and keeps them company in their dying hour. The sting of death has been withdrawn, and the bitterness of it has been taken away. For in virtue of the faith which has made him one with Christ, a Christian has died to sin, has passed into the state where there is no more condemnation.

¶ It is told of Leonardo da Vinci that on his death-bed the king came to visit and cheer him. He talked to his majesty "lamenting that he had offended God and man in that he had not

[1] Henry Vaughan.

laboured in art as he ought to have done." Suddenly he was seized with a paroxysm, and the king, taking him in his arms to give him comfort, the weary penitent "died in the arms of his king." The words are a parable of that which awaits every Christian in the hour of death. He will die in the arms of his King, "the Eternal God, his refuge, and underneath the everlasting arms," and so the pathway will not be strange.[1]

III.

Fear not what comes after Death.

"I have the keys of death and of Hades."

Two things in the rendering of the Authorized Version have given rise to much misapprehension. One is the order in which, following an inferior reading, it has placed the two things specified. And the other is that mistranslation, as it has come to be, of the word *Hades* by the word "Hell." The true original does not read "hell and death," but "death and *Hades*," the dim unseen regions in which *all* the dead, whatsoever their condition may be, are gathered. The Hades of the New Testament includes the Paradise into which the penitent thief was promised entrance, as well as the Gehenna which threatened to open for the impenitent.

Here it is figured as being a great gloomy fortress, with bars and gates and locks, of which that "shadow feared of man" is the warder, and keeps the portals. But he does not keep the keys. The kingly Christ has these in His own hand.

¶ When land on both sides of a river is held by the same farmer he also has the rights of the water. In the same manner Jesus Christ is the owner, on this side as well as the other side. Consequently He has the rights of the river which divides the two worlds.[2]

1. Jesus went into death and Hades to become their Master on behalf of men. It was not necessary for Him to seek the keys of death and Hades for Himself, for He was in Himself the Lord of Life, and death and Hades were His vassals. It was humanity that had lost the keys, and was in bondage to death and Hades, and it was for humanity, and as its representative, that Jesus "became dead," in order that He might "become alive again" and

[1] J. Waddell. [2] Richard Jones.

bear for us the keys of death and Hades. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Because He was the "Living one," He broke death's power, and Hades could not detain Him. It is a Divine paradox that the Lord of essential life should enter into death and Hades at all, but it would have been more than a paradox, it would have been the subversion of eternal truth and reason, if they had been able to detain Him. By voluntary surrender He entered into their domain, and by His will He burst their bands asunder and shattered their prison. They were compelled to admit into their stronghold One stronger than they, and they were conquered in their own citadel. They who had conquered millions were at last conquered for men by the Son of Man. With the majesty of invincible life all was measured out beforehand, not only the entrance into death's domain, but also the rising on the third day. Conquering all the dark domain, He came forth bearing the keys of death and Hades. "I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore."

¶ There is a well-known engraving of Monica and her son St. Augustine. They clasp hands in the twilight, and look wistfully into the open sky. They are not gazing at the stars, their eyes are turned towards the infinite; they are asking—Beyond the horizon, what? Who will read for us the everlasting riddle? There is a little poem by George MacDonald—

> Traveller, what lies over the hill?
> Traveller, tell to me;
> I am only a child at the window-sill,
> Over I cannot see.

A verse in Richard Baxter's hymn answers it well—

> My knowledge of that life is small,
> The eye of faith is dim;
> But 'tis enough that *Christ* knows all,
> And I shall be with Him.[1]

2. Jesus now carries the keys. Keys are symbols of authority and law; and the keys of death remind us that government and

[1] F. Harper, *A Broken Altar*, 47.

order prevail in the realm of mortality. Having regard to events which we constantly witness, it might seem that death is entirely lawless. Sweeter than the virgin rose, the young perish with the rose, whilst the very aged wearily grow older still; the strong are broken by sickness in a day, whilst the feeble linger on in helplessness and pain; the good cease from the land, whilst the vicious remain to torment and pollute. We know not when death will make its appearance, or whom it will strike; it seems the most fitful of agents, setting at naught all probability and prophecy. But just as the meteorologist sees, and sees ever more clearly, how law governs the wind which bloweth where it listeth, so the actuary discerns regulating principles under the apparent capriciousness of death, and bases his insurance tables upon those ascertained principles. However it may seem, the dark archer never draws his bow at a venture. The gate of the grave is not blown about by the winds of chance; it has keys, it opens and shuts by royal authority.

To have the key of any experience means to have entered into it and passed through it and endured it, and learned its secrets and made them your own.

Now Jesus knows what dying is like, and He knows what comes after. By the grace of God He tasted death for every man. He Himself felt that fear of it which makes cowards of us all. He Himself shrank from it, as we do. He Himself endured it, as we must. He suffered far more than any other man ever did or ever need, suffer. Of all men He was most solitary and forsaken. He trod the wine-press alone. He died deserted, in the dark. He Himself gave up the ghost, and went down into a human grave. He was crucified, dead and buried, and He descended into Hades. He went wherever we, in our turn, must go. He passed the mysterious gateway, and as Man He entered the unseen world, and all the secrets of that unutterable experience belong to Him.

¶ One of the most profound and suggestive legends of ancient Greece was the legend of the Sphinx. The Sphinx, according to the old story, was a monstrous creature, half human, half animal, who had a riddle to propound to any travellers who passed her way. What exactly the riddle was does not matter to us just now. All that concerns us is that here was a creature propounding her riddle to men and exacting their lives as forfeit if

they failed to answer it. Traveller after traveller, the legend says, tried and failed and perished. But at last there came one who discovered the answer, and the Sphinx, her secret discovered, destroyed herself. Whenever I think of that Greek legend I feel that from first to last it is nothing but a parable of death. Death is the Sphinx. Ever since the world began death has been in it propounding to mankind this tremendous riddle, "If a man die, shall he live again?"—challenging them to discover her own secret, saying to them, "Explain me or pay the forfeit in a life passed in fear and bondage." And generation after generation tried to discover the secret and explain the riddle. The greatest sages and philosophers and teachers tried and failed. The psalmists and prophets of the Old Testament tried and failed. Death remained the terrible and inscrutable Sphinx. But there came One at last who "became dead" and went down into the grave, and on the morning of the third day came out of it again. And now He says to the world, "*I have the key.*"[1]

3. The keys of death and Hades are in the hand of Him who is seated on the judgment-seat. "He openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth." Nor is the consolation derived from the thought that all power is in the hand of Jesus Christ. That would be an untrustworthy source of comfort. For the Christian would not desire or wish that the power should be strained on his behalf, or that an unworthy verdict should be given. For on that day it will be found that those who obtain the sentence of acquittal and of reward have become worthy of their place in the Father's Kingdom. They have become the righteousness of God in Christ. They have become like Christ, have really obtained the Spirit of adoption, and have learned the language of the Father's family, and are really the sons of God. The final procedure recognizes all that has been done for them, and all that is accomplished in them, and the verdict is given accordingly. Justified by grace, and yet judged according to works, is the final wonder of the Christian experience.

The weary child, the long play done,
Wags slow to bed at set of sun;
Sees mother leave, fears night begun,
But by remembered kisses made
To feel, tho' lonely, undismayed,
Glides into dreamland unafraid.

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of Grace*, 128.

The weary man, life's long day done,
Looks lovingly at his last sun;
Sees all friends fade, fears night begun,
But by remembered mercies made
To feel, tho' dying, undismayed,
Glides into glory unafraid.

The Tree of Life.

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The Tree of Life.

To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.—Rev. ii. 7.

The Church at Ephesus had an early history full of promise. St. Paul addressed to it a noble and eloquent Epistle; but in the end of it he gave emphatic warning of spiritual dangers, and charged the Ephesian Christians to put on the panoply of God that they might "stand in the evil day." The same Apostle, in an address to the elders of the Church, warned them that "grievous wolves" would enter into the fold "not sparing the flock." His exhortation to them to watch, and the subsequent admonitions of St. John, were not without good effect. Firm discipline was maintained; false apostles were detected and repudiated; a libertine sect tried to obtain a footing, but was deservedly scouted. And yet a temptation had made some way among the orthodox Christians of Ephesus. Their fault was a decay of spiritual affection; there was a waning of their first love. There were, it is true, work, labour, patience, intolerance of evil men, spiritual discrimination, unfainting perseverance. The Ephesians saw through the pretensions of those who falsely claimed apostleship; they resisted the wiles of the Nicolaitans, who would have sapped their very life through fleshly indulgences. But, with all that was good among them, they had left their first love. The process had not produced lukewarmness, as in Laodicea; nor was there, as in Sardis, the chill of death. But the cooling process had begun; the fervour of first love was gone. Whatever individual exceptions there might be, this was the condition of the church as a whole. The overcomer, in Ephesus, therefore, would be the man who rose above the tendencies to waning love, the man in whose heart love continued not merely to abide, but to deepen and intensify. Health and strength might fail, inducing physical languor; age might come stealing on, with its feebleness and loss of enjoy-

ment; but even unto death would love continue, profounder, more ardent and more fit for service and sacrifice in the end than in the beginning—able to take up the glorious challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." To this victor, loving on in spite of all deadening and benumbing influences, a very great promise is given: "To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God." The Nicolaitans promised sensual enjoyment, as in an earthly paradise, in the gratification of the appetites of the flesh; the Christian victor shall inherit the paradise of God, and shall eat of the tree of life in the midst thereof.

¶ I have a recollection of a book I read when a boy called *Danesbury House*. It was written in order to illustrate the value of temperance. Though it is forty years since I saw it, or read it, there is a scene in that book which has remained with me all my life. It describes one of the boys of the house who had become a victim of drink. By the grace of God he determined to break the habit and to overcome. The picture is given of the struggle in his room, of his turning to the Bible and opening at this text, "To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life." And the picture is drawn of that young man, broken by indulgence, his will weakened by drink, falling on his face and covering the Bible with his tears as he prayed to overcome. And the end of it was he did overcome, and became completely reclaimed. That has haunted me all my life. It seems to me that to overcome temptation, even one temptation, is to taste of the tree of life. To overcome all temptations is to eat of the tree and dwell in the paradise of God.[1]

I.

Access to the Tree of Life.

"The tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God."

1. The word "Paradise" has a curious history. Originally it was a name given to certain royal pleasure parks in which the sovereigns of ancient Persia took delight; a vast tract of enclosed

[1] R. F. Horton.

country abounding in natural forest, timber as well as cultivated fruit trees; a place half park, half orchard, with springs of clear water keeping cool the meadow-lands, as well as open glades for sport, with here and there a terraced garden gay with flowers. Such was the scene styled first a Paradise. The Hebrews learned the word through their captivity in the East, as the Greeks learned it a little later during the campaigns of Alexander; and when the Old Testament came to be translated into Greek it was by this borrowed name that scholars interpreted the ancient garden of God, which had been man's primeval seat in his golden age of innocence. Thus it became fairly naturalized among the Jews, and in our Lord's time it had come to be transferred from Eden to the site of that Hades where the disembodied spirits lived—the region where all the Jews were believed to await Messiah's coming

In the New Testament the word "Paradise" is to be found only three times. Its first occurrence is in the great word of our Lord addressed to the penitent malefactor on the cross "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." What the rude outlaw understood by the gracious words of his great Fellow-Sufferer that day could be nothing but this, that when death should release them both from their agony they should be received together among the righteous dead—he, undeserving child of Abraham, received beneath the favouring of Israel's martyred Christ and King. On each of the two other occasions in which the term "Paradise" occurs in the New Testament it is used in a new sense—to describe the heaven of the Christian. The first time it recurs is where St. Paul is boasting of his rapture from earth to the immediate seat and vision of God—"caught up into Paradise" he writes, "and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." The last time the word occurs, which is in this text in Revelation, it is again used as an equivalent for heaven—the final home of the beatified saints. Of this celestial Eden restored to men we have a description, very familiar to all of us, in the closing chapters of this same Apocalypse—a description which has coloured all the imagery of Christendom and its sacred songs.

> That Eden of earth's sunrise cannot vie
> With Paradise beyond her sunset sky
> Hidden on high.

Four rivers watered Eden in her bliss,
But Paradise hath One which perfect is
In sweetnesses.

Eden had gold, but Paradise hath gold
Like unto glass of splendours manifold
Tongue hath not told.

Eden had sun and moon to make her bright;
But Paradise hath God and Lamb for light,
And hath no night.

Unspotted innocence was Eden's best;
Great Paradise shows God's fulfilled behest,
Triumph and rest.[1]

¶ The Paradise of God can no more be determined locally than the original Garden of Eden. It is no more invisible than visible. It belongs to a region of another kind of experience than that of the senses. A paradise of God—we shall get the meaning of it by being of it. Let us repeat it to ourselves day and night for a week: "The tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God." The meaning of it will begin to clear itself without effort. It is a state, a condition of experience which is closely connected with Jesus. It is not in a particular locality; it is in Him, or, rather, He is in it. It is a place where His thought has become the atmosphere and His life the life.[2]

2. It is touching to see, in the later Jewish literature, how conscious men were of that shut door which Adam had closed against himself and his posterity; and in their books a favourite image of the goodness of the end was that then the prohibition should be withdrawn, and men should come back to what they had lost. In the Book of Esdras we read, "For you is Paradise opened and the tree of life planted"; and in Enoch, "No mortal is permitted to touch this tree of delicious fragrance till the Great Day of Judgment; but then it will be given to the righteous and the humble." In this Book of Revelation the image comes again and again: "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life." It had become a symbol of all that men had lost in their existence, which only God could restore.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poetical Works*, 162.
[2] R. F. Horton.

It was a symbol of great depth of meaning; for when men talked of the hope of Eden they confessed that what they lamented daily was not a fresh disaster or exclusion, but an old one, running back to Adam and the beginning.

¶ In the first glimpse of the Garden that is given us in the Book of Beginnings we are shown a picture of the ideal home of innocence, of the soul of the untried child of humanity. But there falls a shadow upon the picture as we note the entrance of sin, which results in the loss of innocence and the expulsion from the Garden and the unsheathing of the flaming sword to guard the sacred Tree of Life.

But there is given us another picture of the Garden in that other Book of Beginnings, the revelation that was given to John of the new heaven and the new earth. Beautiful is the Garden now as when it first sprang fresh from its Maker's hand. The gates are open to the four quarters of the wilderness. The flaming sword is in its sheath, and One like unto a Son of Man, clad in white robes and wearing a crown of victory, stands to welcome the returning exiles. As they come, they come by way of a Cross in the wilderness and along the banks of a glorious river, whose source they find to be in the Garden, where it waters the Tree of Life, of which they may now freely eat. One Garden is lost to us—we may not go back to Eden. But there is another Garden we may gain—it is ours to go forward, and the way of the Cross will lead us to its gates.[1]

3. Men who have little thought of the sin of Adam have yet a haunting sorrow because of what they have lost in life. There is a real pathos in the common legend of a golden age coming first which Greeks and Romans cherished, when existence was sweet and fresh and right, and all men lived in peace. The Jews also thought of a blessed spring-tide of the world. Man's life began in a garden with flowers and streams, and God walked with him there, till by the one disobedience the charm was broken, and Adam must go out to a world with thistles instead of flowers, with labour and sickness and dying. They believed in God enough to believe that Eden was not lost, though no wandering horsemen ever came to encamp in it, or water their horses in its rivers, or caught sight of the flashing sword of God's angel who kept the way of entrance. They believed that there was a way

[1] J. B. Maclean, *The Secret of the Stream*, 138.

back, but they tried in vain to find it. To some the story of the earthly paradise, standing at the head of the Bible history of man, has seemed a mere fable or myth, with no more truth in it and of no more account than the dream of a golden age; to some it has seemed an allegorical method of setting forth, as for children, the sinlessness and happiness of man's original estate and the misery of departure from God, true only in the sense in which the "Pilgrim's Progress" is true; to some the outward and literal have been all in all, and under the influence of a strong fascination they have even dreamed of discovering some lingering traces of the garden, or at least finding out where it lay. In vain: every trace of it has vanished as completely as the dew from last summer's grass. The paradise of promise and hope is the paradise of God; no earthly garden, however fair, no restoration (through a cancelled forfeiture) of the paradise that has withered and died; in the paradise of God grows the tree called "the tree of life."

¶ The tree of life was as significant a symbol of life-giving Divine power to the Asian Greeks as to the Jews, though in a different way. Trees had been worshipped as the home of the Divine nature and power from time immemorial, and were still so worshipped in Asia Minor as in the ancient world generally. On some sacred tree the prosperity and safety of a family or tribe or city was often believed to depend. When the sacred olive-tree on the Acropolis of Athens put forth a new shoot after the city had been burned by the Persians, the people knew that the safety of the State was assured. The belief was widely entertained that the life of a man was connected with some tree, and returned into that tree when he died. The tree which grew on a grave was often thought to be penetrated with the spirit and life of the buried man. The tree of life in the Revelation was in the mind of the Ephesians a Christianization of the sacred tree in the pagan religion and folk-lore; it was a symbolic expression which was full of meaning to the Asian Christians, because to them the tree had always been the seat of Divine life and the intermediary between Divine and human nature. The problem which was constantly present to the ancient mind in thinking of the relation of man to God appears here: how can the gulf that divides human nature from the Divine nature be bridged over? how can God come into effective relation to man? In the holy tree the Divine life is bringing itself closer to man. He who can eat of the tree of life is feeding on the Divine power and nature, is strengthening

himself with the body and the blood of Christ. The idea was full of power to the Asian readers.[1]

4. "To him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God" is the mystical expression of the great truth that Jesus can incorporate us in His own life, and make us sharers of His own joy. He is in paradise. If we are in Him, we are in paradise.

Why should a Divinely sustained and everlasting life be promised as the reward of victory, seeing it is the present possession of all believers? For thus runs the testimony of Scripture: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life"—*hath* this life already; it is already kindled and shrined in his breast. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life." Not only is all this true, but it is pre-supposed in the promise given in the text to the overcomer. For it is to be borne in mind that the earnest, enjoyed in this life, is of the same nature as the future felicity and glory. While the life eternal in its beginnings is a present possession of the believer in Jesus, yet in its glorious fulness, or what Jesus calls its "abundance," it shall be also the future reward of him that overcometh. Hence St. Paul writes to Timothy, "Lay hold on eternal life"; and the Apostle John says, "This is the promise that he hath promised us, even *eternal life.*"

It will not meet us where the shadows fall
  Beside the sea that bounds the Evening Land;
It will not greet us with its first clear call
  When Death has borne us to the farther strand.

It is not something yet to be revealed—
  The everlasting life—'tis here and now;
Passing unseen because our eyes are sealed
  With blindness for the pride upon our brow.

It calls us 'mid the traffic of the street,
  And calls in vain, because our ears are lent
To these poor babblements of praise that cheat
  The soul of heaven's truth, with earth's content.

[1] W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, 247.

It dwells not in innumerable years;
  It is the breath of God in timeless things—
The strong, divine persistence that inheres
  In love's red pulses and in faith's white wings.

It is the power whereby low lives aspire
  Unto the doing of a selfless deed,
Unto the slaying of a soft desire,
  In service of the high, unworldly creed.

It is the treasure that is ours to hold
  Secure, while all things else are turned to dust;
That priceless and imperishable gold
  Beyond the scathe of robber and of rust.

It is a clarion when the sun is high,
  The touch of greatness in the toil for bread,
The nameless comfort of the Western sky,
  The healing silence where we lay our dead.

And if we feel it not amid our strife,
  In all our toiling and in all our pain—
This rhythmic pulsing of immortal life—
  Then do we work and suffer here in vain.[1]

II.

Access through Christ.

"To him will I give to eat of the tree of life."

1. Every word of the text might stand our scrutiny, and none calls for more careful examination than the word "give," indicating that Christ is the bestower of the reward. He who overcomes might seem to have earned something, and the reward be his by right. But in the Kingdom of God there is no thought of meriting. All faithfulness in duty has its reward, and many Scriptures declare that the reward is in some way proportioned to the work, so that a man may actually reap the thing which he has sown. And yet has any man who has known God ever dared to think of Him as in his debt? At every stage of life such a man is apt to

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *Poems and Sonnets*, 9.

be impressed by his own extraordinary mercies; the element of grace in life, of things better than he has worked for, bulks largely in his view. And when he comes to the end, and the question of the wages due to him comes up for settlement, the thought of self-assertion is far away; for the least of God's rewards has in it something that passes human expectation. A man might humbly ask only to be within the door, to have a sight, however distant, of that Face; but to be within the door includes the whole—"a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And those to whom that blessedness is given take it not as the deserved return for their poor services on earth, but as one last miracle of the grace of God, who gives men what they never could have earned; and they take it from the hands of Him who "overcame the sharpness of death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." For it is Christ who says, "I will give," Jesus Christ risen and enthroned, who has ascended on high, and has received gifts for men.

¶ The result of our Lord's varied teaching about life is to exhibit it as the ultimate and fundamental form of human good, the highest and the deepest blessing which man can in any wise attain; and that especially because it is what most closely links him to God, and may most truly be represented as issuing from God's own being. But while the disciples were being led by this gradual and often indirect guidance to esteem rightly the preciousness of life, they were learning also in like manner that the life thus highly exalted was in some sense embodied in the person of their Lord. After the earlier days of intercourse had brought them to recognize Him as a trustworthy teacher concerning life and the way to attain it, nay as Himself a giver of it, they soon came to feel that when He was giving them life He was giving them of Himself, for they received it after a fashion which the externality of such terms as "given" and "gift" renders them incompetent to describe.[1]

2. In the text Jesus Christ claims to be the Arbiter of men's deserts and the Giver of their rewards. He has said that He will give to all the multitude of faithful fighters who have brought their shields out of the battle, and their swords undinted, the gift of life eternal. In Christ risen from the dead we have, says St. John, the assurance of things which the past never had. The tree of life is promised, which was denied to Adam. The Eden of earth's sunrise

[1] F. J. A. Hort, *The Way: the Truth: the Life*, 109.

had a beauty of its own, yet, fugitive and ill-secured, it was not fit to last; but the things which Christ brought in are not to be withdrawn. If He undid by His long warfare an old disaster, it is for ever; the salvation of Jesus is irreversible. The text at least implies that there is some power in Jesus Christ to give lost things back again; and those who know His work must have seen startling resurrections of old things—purity returning to those whose life had been sullied, hope returning to some who had sinned their chances all away. "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten," says God. All is not lost; and Christ holds the secret of how to give it back to men. Eden is not lost, it is with God; and through the grace of God we may see what life took from us—the wishes too great, the hopes too fair, the knowledge too wonderful. After all, it is a heathen fancy that the golden age is behind; it is the thought of those who erred, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God; and we should learn from Jesus Christ to trust Him to do better for us than the best the past has seen.

¶ Of all the various ways in which the imagination has distorted truth none has worked so much harm as reverence for past ages. It is this which inspired poets with the notion of a Golden Age, in which the world was filled with peace, and crime was unknown. And it is this same principle which diffused a belief that in the olden time men were not only more virtuous and happy, but attained to a larger stature and lived to a greater age than is possible for their degenerate descendants.[1]

¶ The Golden Age is in the future, not in the past, whatever the poets may say. We look back with humiliation to one Garden, the defiled and deserted Paradise of Eden: we look forward with joy and hope to another Garden, the glorious and incorruptible Paradise of Heaven that shall never be destroyed.[2]

3. In the promise "I will give" there is involved the eternal continuance of Christ's relation to men as the Revealer and Mediator of God. Not only when the victor crosses the threshold and enters the Capitol of the heavens, but all through the ages, Christ is the Medium by which the Divine life passes into men. True, there is a sense in which He shall deliver up the Kingdom to His Father, when the partial end of the present dispensation has come. But He is the Priest of mankind for

[1] A. W. Momerie. [2] J. B. Maclean, *The Secret of the Stream*, 136.

ever; and for ever is His Kingdom enduring. And through all the endless ages which we have a right to hope we shall see, there will never come a point in which it will not remain as true as it is at this moment: "No man hath seen God at any time, nor can see him; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Christ is for ever the Giver of life, in the heavens as on earth. There all the blessedness and the existence, which is the substratum and condition of the blessedness, are ours only because, wavelet by wavelet, throbbing out as from a central fountain, there flows into the redeemed a life communicated by Christ Himself.

¶ The immortality which Christ proclaimed in His own Person and life had indeed been adumbrated in deeds of valour and lives of heroic self-sacrifice, but *as* a revelation of *life*, of the true and proper life of man, it was as new as it has ever since been unique. "I am come that they might have *life*" was the burden of all He taught and did and suffered: and but for that "coming" it is impossible to conceive of our eyes being opened to the measureless possibilities of our spiritual life. When St. Paul exclaimed in the simple rendering of Luther, "Christ is my *life*," he defined what immortality really is. The triumph lies in the instinct to triumph; the extension of life in the quality of the life.[1]

¶ To be a Christian is to have a new life in the soul. Christ Himself lives in each one who believes in Him. St. Paul puts it very graphically when he says that he is dead, crucified with Christ, that is, as to his old life. Then he adds: "Yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." These words reveal the secret of St. Paul's wonderful life. It was Christ living in him that made him the man he was. This is the secret of every transfigured life. There is no other way to get it. We must open our heart and let Christ enter into us and fill us. He is ever eager to do this, and will possess us just as far as we yield our life up to Him.[2]

[1] T. J. Hardy, *The Gospel of Pain.* [2] J. R. Miller.

III.

Access for the Victor.

"To him that overcometh."

Whilst access to the tree of life is a gift, we cannot miss the fact that there is a condition—the gift is only "to him that overcometh." In all God's greater gifts there is a certain condition of congruity. These noble things cannot be passed from hand to hand like sums of money; even Christ can give only to those who are in a condition to receive. "If ye forgive not," He said, "neither will your Father forgive you." Now, as to this condition of overcoming, it tells us how St. John conceived of the Christian life. To him it was a course of overcoming the world and one's self, and he found its earliest impulse in that great victory of the cross.

1. Here is life promised in all its range and detail; in all its clear meaning and wide power: life through all eternity. But how hard a promise it is: "to him that overcometh will I give," leaving all with ourselves. Christ does not say here—I give thee life that thou mayest overcome; but, Overcome and the life will be thine. The responsibility, the start, the strain He leaves upon our own wills; even as His Apostle intends, where he says, not "accept the faith," but "fight the good fight of faith." Yes, it is stern; but how true to our experience. Did we ever pass through a temptation in which we did not feel: Here even God cannot go before us, nor stand instead of us. Otherwise it were not worth the name of temptation; it were not in any wise our temptation. For who is it that is to be tempted, tested, put to proof and trial? Is it God or Christ? It is ourselves. But precisely as the loneliness and rigour of such an experience come home to us, God has begun to fulfil His promise of life. For it is in the bare realization of ourselves—and all the more if it even come upon us for the moment without any religious mitigation of its solitude and its pain—it is in this very moment, of lonely responsibility and unmitigated strain, that life begins. It is the necessity and prerogative of our manhood that in its moral

conflicts, God, who has assuredly called us and is ready to help us, must wait for a decision and victory which shall be our own. However clear His call,—and all our salvation starts from that,—however near His help, *we* have to decide, *we* have to overcome.

¶ Bishop Welldon in one of his sermons to the boys at Harrow, of which famous public school he was for many years head-master, spoke of the many bright lads whom he had known as scholars—pleasant, popular, courteous, and frank—of whom every one spoke well, but who never dreamt of such a thing as self-discipline or self-denial, who made no effort, who would never do what was irksome or unpleasant. After these boys left the restraints of school, a subtle, surprising change came over them. Some from mere self-indulgence lapsed into open sin; others became simply do-nothings, amusing themselves in sport or luxury or worldly ways, doing little or nothing of good to any human being. They lacked any power of overcoming; and this it was which proved so dangerous or fatal to their lives. "Since this is so," said Dr. Welldon preaching in the school chapel, "I put to you the pointed question—to every one of you—what have you 'overcome'? Has there in your life been any battle, any victory? Are there any scars upon your breast, or any laurels on your brow? Is there any habit, any disposition, any desire of which you can say, 'I have fought and I have overcome it; it is beaten'? Yes, I know you will be brave in the face of danger; but oh! that I could be sure you would be equally brave in the face of temptation. You will conquer others; but, my boys, will you conquer yourselves? What does God ask of you—of every Church, of every person? It is one thing—one thing only. It is not that he should be great or clever or adventurous. It is that he should 'overcome.' 'To him that overcometh,' to him who is patient and strong, to him alone is given the amaranthine crown."[1]

¶ There was once on a door in Edinburgh a motto, and it ran: "He that tholes overcomes," and a lad passing the house on his way to school read the motto, but did not understand it. He came home and asked: "What is the meaning of that word 'thole'?" He was told by his parent it meant to bear with patience—"he that tholes overcomes." The boy, passing that motto day by day, formed the resolution that he would thole, that he would bear with patience. That boy eventually became the founder of the great Edinburgh firm of Chambers, and he attri-

[1] J. E. C. Welldon, *Youth and Duty*, 249.

buted the extraordinary success of his life to realizing the meaning of that motto, "He that tholes overcomes."[1]

2. But the question is, "Can we overcome?" Is it to be assumed the victory is easy? Is it easy to overcome the obstacles, the difficulties of life, to overcome the temptations in our own nature and in the world around us, to overcome ourselves and stand supreme over that lower self which is of the earth earthy? Is it possible to overcome? The prize is beautiful. The promise is a vision. But is it possible? We can overcome if there is an adequate power behind, and that adequate power is there—Christ, who is the reward of overcoming. It all turns upon that. The power by which we can overcome cannot be said to be ours. It would be a contradiction in terms to say it is. We have to overcome ourselves. What is the power to overcome the self? It must be another. It is Christ. "This is the victory that overcometh the world." "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." He can enable every one to overcome. The victor can conquer only in one way. If we trust in Christ we shall get His power into our hearts, and if we get His power into our hearts, then "we shall be more than conquerors through him that loved us." The power of sin is great, but His power is much greater. Temptation is dazzling and sometimes seductive; but He can give us the victory. Actual sin is overcome by an actual Saviour.

¶ I saw some time ago a beautiful remark. Among the Irish labourers who come over every year to the harvest in England was one who was accustomed to come to the same place year after year. He was of a sullen, moody nature, but one year he came completely changed—bright, joyful, ready to help, encouraging every one. They asked him what the cause was, and they twitted him, and made humorous suggestions about the change that had come over him. At last he turned to them all and said: "You are quite right about the change, but you are wrong about the cause. The truth is, I found the greatest friend in the world, Jesus, and my heart is just full of joy." That was his answer. I cannot see how it could be better or truer. When you have found Jesus, you may be sad in a sense, and sick and weary in a sense, but your heart is full of joy. He has given you "to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God."[2]

[1] R. F. Horton. [2] *Ibid.*

3. Let Christ Himself be our example, whose whole life on earth was a warfare with the powers of evil; who found its crises and its agonies in the hours when He was alone with the Father; "who in the days of his flesh when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears . . . was heard for his godly fear." Let us follow Him, who was tempted in all things like as we are, till by feeling our fellowship with Him in agony and the awful difficulty of doing the Father's will, we shall also share His faith that we have this conflict to endure just because we can bear it, just because of our freedom, and just in order to realize that we are alive. "As I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne." Our Lord Jesus conquered all opposed to Him. In their presence He never fainted, He never failed, He never suffered defeat. Calm, confident victory rests upon every page of the sacred story. As one reads the narrative of conquest, one is amazed at the prolific and abundant spiritual energy which everywhere confronts the powers of ill. Our Lord overcame the world; He never bowed to the enticements or the glitter; they would make Him a king of the worldly order, but He rejected the allurement and went away to pray. He overcame the flesh; His life is characterized by order and beauty; on the one hand there was no harsh asceticism, and on the other hand there was no unseemly excess. He overcame the devil; they met again and again; "the prince of this world cometh"; he was ever coming, but he came to no purpose, and he achieved no triumph. Our Lord was always victor over the antagonists which stand in our path to-day.

¶ There is, perhaps, no one term whose significance is less truly understood than that of overcoming. When Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world," there was something meant quite different from its commonly received interpretation. Many persons have translated it to imply that in *this* world—this present life—tribulation is the appointed lot of man; but that death will end this, and by that event we "overcome the world"—that is, enter into joy and peace as inevitable conditions of the life beyond. But is there not undoubtedly a far deeper and nobler meaning than this? The "world" does not refer merely to life on this planet—the threescore years and ten allotted to man in this present state of existence—but rather it has reference to a con-

dition. By "the world" is meant all that materiality which must be overcome before one can enter into that state of mind which is the kingdom of heaven, and which may be the condition of life here just as surely as hereafter. We overcome only as we rise to the spiritual plane. "Be of good cheer," said Jesus: "I have overcome the world." Where He has gone we may follow. If He overcame the world, so may we. It is not easy; it *is* possible. Not being easy to achieve, it is, when once attained, a condition so easy that it preserves itself and progresses by its own momentum. One who is succeeding in living to any perceptible degree the spiritual life rather than the material, realizes for himself the profound truth in the assertion of the Christ, that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. There is in it the peace which indeed passeth all understanding, and the joy that the world can neither give nor take away. Believe and love—all the duties of the world and all the privileges of heaven are condensed in those three words. Believe and love. Not only trust, but know, believe. Hold fast to the conviction that the forces of life are Divine. Come into harmony with them, and thus live above the plane on which discord is possible, thus overcome the world.[1]

4. After every temptation conquered, after every self-indulgence refused, after every duty accepted and patiently performed, we do feel, in a hundred fresh impulses of moral vigour and hopefulness, this life which those enjoy who overcome. He who conquers is a new man—fresh, elastic, confident. The skies are bright above him, and his heart is clear within. There is given to him an enjoyment of God's world denied to other men; and at the same time a power of patience with things that are evil, for he has already conquered these in himself, and knows that their day is determined. What a generous trust in others our victories over ourselves give us! What an eye for the good that is in them! What a power of encouraging that good! While about us is the atmosphere of peace which springs from the faith that God reigns.

¶ When Philip Henry was thirty years old, he noted in his diary that "so old and no older was Alexander when he conquered the great world; but I have not subdued the little world, myself."[2]

¶ A life of renunciation appeared to Francis as the goal of his efforts, but he felt that his spiritual novitiate was not yet ended.

[1] Lilian Whiting, *The World Beautiful*, 161.

[2] J. Moffatt, *The Golden Book of John Owen*, 159.

He suddenly experienced a bitter assurance of the fact. He was riding on horseback one day, his mind more than ever possessed with the desire to lead a life of absolute devotion, when at a turn of the road he found himself face to face with a leper. The frightful malady had always inspired in him an invincible repulsion. He could not control a movement of horror, and by instinct he turned his horse in another direction.

If the shock had been severe, the defeat was complete. He reproached himself bitterly. To cherish such fine projects and show himself so cowardly! Was the knight of Christ then going to give up his arms? He retraced his steps and springing from his horse he gave to the astounded sufferer all the money that he had; then kissed his hand as he would have done to a priest. This new victory, as he himself saw, marked an era in his spiritual life.

This victory of Francis had been so sudden that he desired to complete it; a few days later he went to the lazaretto. One can imagine the stupefaction of these wretches at the entrance of the brilliant cavalier. If in our days a visit to the sick in our hospitals is a real event awaited with feverish impatience, what must not have been the appearance of Francis among these poor recluses? One must have seen sufferers thus abandoned, to understand what joy may be given by an affectionate word, sometimes even a simple glance.

Moved and transported, Francis felt his whole being vibrate with unfamiliar sensations. For the first time he heard the unspeakable accents of a gratitude which cannot find words burning enough to express itself, which admires and adores the benefactor almost like an angel from heaven.[1]

[1] Paul Sabatier, *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, 26.

Fidelity and its Reward.

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Fidelity and its Reward.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.—Rev. ii. 10.

1. It was to the believers at Smyrna, or rather to their official representative, to the person who was called "the angel of the church" there, that this exhortation was sent. It is generally believed that, when the Book of Revelation was written, the "angel" of the Smyrnean Church was Polycarp—the aged disciple of St. John—who, rather than deny his Master, Christ, perished on the scaffold, having made that noble confession which has sounded through all the ages: "Eighty and six years have I served my Lord Christ, and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"

2. For the Church at Smyrna, the exhortation had a special fitness, inasmuch as it contained a covert allusion to the political history and also to the physical aspect of the city which could not possibly have applied to any other of the places mentioned by St. John in his Apocalypse.

(1) The reference to Smyrna's history is in the words "Be thou faithful," which every Christian in the city would understand. The motto was stamped, as it were, on her very stones. Her inhabitants had for centuries been the steady and devoted allies of the Roman people. When not a few of the peoples throughout Asia Minor had sought to weaken the power of the Cæsars, the Smyrneans had shown not the least desire to do so, but had kept rigidly aloof from all combines or conspiracies. When serious difficulties arose for their trusted friends, the Romans, whose army was suffering from the intense cold and other hardships of a winter campaign against Mithridates, the citizens of Smyrna readily stripped themselves of the garments that they could do without, and dispatched them to the seat of war for the benefit of the Roman soldiers. This signal instance of the fidelity of the

Smyrneans was generally known; their reputation for faithfulness was well established. Accordingly, to those of them composing the Church at Smyrna, the exhortation of the Apostle would have the tacit force of a compliment, and would thus at once win their attention to the duty it enjoined—that just as in civic affairs they had been staunch and true to Cæsar, so in religious matters they should manifest unfaltering fidelity to Christ.

(2) Again, the words, "I will give thee the crown of life," also had a peculiar fitness to Smyrna—a reference which the Christians who resided there could not fail to appreciate. Smyrna has been called "the city of life"; and its life and brightness are the characteristics that at once impress a visitor. It has been likened in shape to a glorious statue sitting with its feet in the sea. Until within a few years the hill into which the city runs back, and which was likened to the head of the statue, was crowned with the ruins of what had been a magnificent and apparently impregnable castle. This is what was known as the Garland or Crown of Smyrna. One of the great teachers of the place besought the citizens not to be satisfied with a crown of buildings, but to strive to have as its crown pure, patriotic, just and good men. These, he said, are the true garland of a city, its prize, its mark of supremacy—not stone walls, but true and pure citizens. In the words, therefore, which St. John addressed to the Christians of Smyrna there was this further compliment. It was as if he said to them, "I know that ye are citizens of no mean city, that verily yours is a queen among the cities of the earth, but though you are justly proud of it, let me tell you of a crown fairer than any that the world can show or any that the world can dream of—a crown not of material but of spiritual beauty—the crown of life that is for ever, and that is reserved in heaven for all such as, believing in the Lord and serving Him, continue faithful unto death."

I.

The Call to Fidelity.

"Be thou faithful unto death."

1. The Church at Smyrna was in the midst of suffering. Was not that enough? and shall she not be told that her sufferings

were drawing to an end, that the night of weeping was gone by, and that the morning of joy was about to dawn? So we might think; but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways, and we are like children bathing on the shore:

> Buried a wave beneath;
> The second wave succeeds before
> We have had time to breathe.

How often does it happen in the Christian's experience that one burden is laid upon another, and that one wave succeeds another, till he seems left desolate and alone upon the earth. Yet even then he has no assurance that his sufferings are at a close. The consolation afforded to him is, not that there shall be a short campaign, but only that, whether long or short, he shall be more than conqueror through Him that loved him.

(1) To us, the words of the text are partly metaphorical; but they had no metaphorical meaning when they were written. The persecution of Nero had told the Christians what they might expect. Death was the least pain which the world against them had in its quiver. They were hunted like the wild beasts of the woods. They were tortured, exposed to the hatred of the crowd who cheered the lion and the wild bull that tore and dragged them to death. Through these physical woes, as well as through the spiritual struggles that we have, the early followers of Christ had to persevere, were they to be faithful. Those who kept the faith were obliged to look agony of body and death in the face. Men who began the Christian race had then to count the cost, and resolve to pay it. They had to give up *all*, or at least be ready at a moment to give up all—home, friends, wealth, worldly honour—and to take Christ instead, and death.

(2) The Christians of Smyrna were about to suffer more heavily than ever; their enemies were apparently to prevail. They were to be cast into prison; and let us remember that the Roman Empire did not imprison for punishment as we do. They would not burden the State with the support of a number of prisoners. Every man who was in prison was there awaiting either his trial or his death. His trial would end in acquittal, or scourging, or fine, or exile, or death. Some of these poor, struggling, much-maligned Christians would be called upon to seal their

testimony with their blood. "Be thou faithful *unto* (not *until*) death" is the message, not merely through tribulation and poverty and slander, but up to the point of dying; there is no other way to the crown of life; "you must suffer," is Christ's message, "or else be unfaithful." There is no other way to escape suffering save by being untrue, and the message is, "Be thou true and let the devil do his worst."

¶ We, too, in our place and way and measure, may be called upon to suffer in reputation, substance, or even in health and life, for the sake of our absolute fidelity to our Master and His cause. Erasmus confessed that he was not constituted of the stuff of which martyrs are made, and many of us feel a similar misgiving concerning ourselves. But if we resolve to be on the Lord's side He will wonderfully strengthen and deliver. The golden-crested wren is one of the tiniest of birds; it is said to weigh only the fifth part of an ounce, and yet, on frailest pinions, it braves hurricanes and crosses northern seas. It often seems in nature as if Omnipotence worked best through frailest organisms; certainly the omnipotence of grace is seen to the greatest advantage in the trembling but resolute saint. Give me the spirit of those who are faithful unto death![1]

2. To what were the Christians of Smyrna called to be faithful—to a selfish aim, to a political cry, to a cause which offered them material rewards? No, faithful unto death, to goodness, to truth, to purity of life, to an ideal life, invisible, beyond the world; to Christ and to such passionate personal love of Him that it was easier to die in agony than to betray His name; faithful to that spirit of His which loved men even unto death, which forgave enemies, whose work was at all risks to overthrow evil and to die that wrong might die; faithful unto death in the cause of man, which Christ made the cause of God. And for this, what support? All they had is contained in that conception of a mighty spiritual kingdom, of which the head was God in Christ, of which all who loved Him were the body, whether dead or living, for time and earth did not disturb their unbroken communion one with another. They were citizens of an eternal Kingdom. They on earth, beaten, driven, tortured, were not left alone; they were the care of angels, they were watched by all the noble dead with unfaltering interest. They ran their race in the

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 311.

arena of the universe, not uncared for, since every Christian heart was praying for them; not without the sense of higher sympathy, not even without the sense of glory, for out of sight, but in most real existence, a cloud of witnesses encompassed them. Solemn, beautiful faces, solemn with the calm of eternal rest, beautiful with the light of holy triumph, watched them with inspiring eyes, and among them One, the Leader and Perfecter of faith, a form like unto a Son of Man, who Himself had done and suffered for the truth—whose power and life was theirs by prayer, and who spoke ever in their ears, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

(1) The word "faithful" here is from the root which means to be convinced. Fidelity is born of conviction, and conviction must have a groundwork and foundation. What then is this faithfulness that is enjoined? The faithfulness of the saints is the assurance of the faithfulness of Jesus. A deep conviction of His fidelity produces their fidelity. Wherever a man, woman, or child under any circumstances of pain or testing is deeply convinced of the fidelity of Christ, they are immediately and necessarily faithful themselves. It is as though He had said to them, "You are going to be cast into prison; 'the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried.' Be faithful; believe still. Live within the limit of a great assurance. Do not question Me; do not doubt Me; depend on Me." The Lord did not mean, "Gather yourselves up and go through." He simply meant, "Trust Me." He did not intend to advise them to gird up their loins and be determined that they would see the business through. That is ever a poor and sorry way of attempting to pass through times of testing. He meant rather, "Trust Me; let Me be your courage. I am alive, and I was dead. I have gone to the limit of this matter. There is no depth I have not fathomed, no darkness I have not penetrated. Be faithful, follow Me, not in the effort of a strenuous determination, but with the ease of a simple trust."

¶ Bishop Collins died whilst on his way in the Messageries Maritimes liner *Saghalien* from Constantinople to Smyrna, whither he was going to hold a confirmation. Clothed in his purple cassock his body was laid to rest under the marble floor of the nave of the Church of St. John the Evangelist.

There, then, his body lies,—in the bosom of that Church of Smyrna, to whose Angel St. John was bidden to write, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." To the first known Bishop of that Church—perhaps already Bishop when the Apocalypse was written—the martyr Ignatius wrote, praising his "resolution in God, settled as upon an immovable rock." "Be watchful," he added, "possessing a spirit that never slumbers. . . . Where work is hardest, great is the gain. . . . The time demands thee. . . . Stand firm like an anvil under the stroke. It is the part of a great athlete to receive blows and to conquer. Study the times, looking for Him who is above time, eternal, invisible, who was made visible for us—intangible, impassible, who for us was made passible and for us in every way endured."[1]

(2) The great Sender of the message makes the claim. We are bound to Him personally. He asks for our loyalty, our personal loyalty to Him, and in that loyalty we shall conquer; because the Christian life is sustained by faith in a personal life, a personal power, and a personal love. We are not supported by abstractions, by adherence to abstract principles of righteousness and truth. Man requires a living fount of power, something warm with life and love; and such is the support of the Christian life. We are held in our course; we are sustained in all the darkness and the trial and persecution and apparent defeat by cleaving to a great heart that was large enough to sacrifice itself for us, and a great loving, throbbing hand that is strong enough to save us.

¶ As in Westminster Abbey at the coronation of King George v. I saw the Prince of Wales kneeling before his father and uttering the old feudal covenant, I thought of how, in ancient times, the old Saxon retainers used to come to him whom they called their lord, whose lands they held, and used to kneel there before him, and put their hands in his, and to say to him, "Dear my Lord, I become liege-man of thine, for life and limb and earthly regard, and I will keep faith and loyalty to thee for life and death, so help me God." And I would to God that we might all in spirit be found kneeling before the Lord of all of us, putting hands of trust in His, and saying to Him with earnestness and sincerity of soul, "Dear my Lord, I become liege-man of Thine for life and limb and earthly regard, and I will keep faith and loyalty to Thee for life and death, so help me God."[2]

[1] A. J. Mason, *Life of William Edward Collins*, 185.
[2] C. Silvester Horne.

3. Faithfulness is victory. When the world kills off the faithful man because it cannot bend his will and take him away from his loyalty, it is not the man that is defeated; it is the world. The world does its last cowardly act, and therein makes its last confession of impotency. The man has conquered it. It can do nothing with him, and when it puts him to death it admits that it has been defeated by him. The Christian conquered the world when he sang at the stake? The Christian conquered when he could fearlessly stand before the tribunal that condemned him, when he talked of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come until the judge quaked before him? No, do not be misled by appearances: it is the loyal man that conquers, the man that is true to principle, that in a way compels the world to persecute and destroy him, because he is stronger than the world in which he lives. "I know that persecution and death are upon thee, but be thou loyal; be thou faithful; thou shalt be victorious, and thou art already victor, in being loyal." The truly strong life is the life that can defy circumstances, that can make every failure a stepping-stone to a nobler resolve, that can maintain its integrity when all the world is against it.

¶ Faithfulness unto death is God's standard for human life. On this He bases His judgments. As we apply this standard, our views on many things undergo a radical change. We come to see that the thing of value is not speed but endurance. The real hero is not he who makes the fastest schedule but he who lasts the longest. There are those who go up like a rocket and come down like a stick. It is the power to hold on that wins. Great Britain's most famous general once said that the difference between the soldiers of his country and those of another was not that the English soldier was braver than other soldiers, but that he was brave five minutes longer. It is endurance that wins the crown.

The thing of value is not achievement but fidelity. It is not what we accomplish but the way we accomplish it. It is our ideals, our principles. It is not success that God looks at, but the struggle. Success is a cheap thing, it is merely relative; but struggle is an affair of eternity, it is a spiritual asset.[1]

4. The text does not mean merely, "Be faithful until death calls you away." The passage is very frequently quoted with a mistaken meaning, as if it simply meant, "Be faithful as long as

[1] J. I. Vance, *Tendency*, 229.

you live; do not give up while life lasts." But it means far more than that; it means, "Be faithful, even though it costs you your life. Be faithful unto prison, be faithful unto persecution, yea, though you be in the presence of the executioner—for faithfulness may entail death—be faithful up to that highest sacrifice of life itself if necessary on the altar of loyalty to Jesus Christ." "Unto death" is thus an intensive, not an extensive, term. Christ does not mean, merely, "to thy life's end," contemplating life under aspects of time, but "to the sharpest and worst which the enemy can inflict upon thee, even to death itself." "Dare and endure," the words would say, "the worst that evil men can threaten and inflict, even death itself." It is true that Christian fidelity must continue to the close of life. Our Lord's promise is to "those who endure to the end," that "they shall be saved." He also said that no one, putting his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God. It is true, no soldier of the cross can win the fight, and wear the honour of victor, who turns from the foe in the day of battle. But, as has been said, the text points out not so much the duration as the intensity of our fidelity. It is, "Be faithful to the enduring of all trials, privations, sufferings, imprisonments, tortures, even to death itself. Endure everything for Christ, and the crown of life shall be yours."

¶ In ancient heroic story there is one figure of which I often think. It is the figure of the old pilot who was sailing his boat in the crisis of a storm on the great tempestuous Ægæan Sea, and in his extremity he was seen to stand erect and cry, in his old pagan way, "Father Neptune, you may sink me if you will, or you may save me if you will, but whatever happens I will keep my rudder true." Everyone can say that. It is not for us to decide our own destinies. It is not for us to say we shall not be overwhelmed by certain storms; it is not for us to say we shall never go under. We do not know how hard the trial is yet to be. But this we can say: "Sink me if you will, or save me if you will, but whatever happens I will never drift, I will steer straight, I will keep my rudder true." By God's grace everyone can do that.[1]

¶ While abhorring war, M. Coillard always had the strongest sympathy with the military profession. His mind seemed to move in its imagery. Christianity, as he conceived it, was the march of an ever-victorious army; to him it meant a loyalty, not

[1] C. Silvester Horne.

a philosophy, still less a ceremonial system. He had no other ambition than to be "a good soldier of Jesus Christ." "A French general," he once wrote, "told his *aide-de-camp* that the politeness of a soldier was *obedience*; and I myself hold that in all circumstances our duty to our Master is *fidelity*."[1]

¶ She was now in Armenia. The roads were beset by Kurds, who twice attacked her caravan. In one of the wretched hamlets through which she passed, a young Armenian, with whom she spoke about the faith, said to her, "We don't know much, but we love the Lord Jesus well enough to die for Him." Here, amongst the Armenians, she realized again what the horrors of this infamous persecution meant for a timid, defenceless people, less manly than the Nestorian Rayahs, in many ways less lovable, but like them, "faithful unto death."[2]

Be faithful unto death. Christ proffers thee
Crown of a life that draws immortal breath:
To thee He saith, yea, and He saith to me,
"Be faithful unto death."

To every living soul that same He saith,
"Be faithful:"—whatsoever else we be,
Let us be faithful challenging His faith.

Tho' trouble storm around us like the sea,
Tho' hell surge up to scare us and to scathe,
Tho' heaven and earth betake themselves to flee,
"Be faithful unto death."[3]

II.

The Reward of Fidelity.

"I will give thee the crown of life."

For this faithfulness what reward is promised? An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, "the crown of life"; not the material rewards so commonly and so coarsely promised, not a life of earthly happiness, but the life which is in God and of God; immortal union with Justice, Purity, and Truth; the transformation

[1] C. W. Mackintosh, *Coillard of the Zambesi*, 106.
[2] A. M. Stoddart, *The Life of Isabella Bird*, 239.
[3] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poetical Works*, 277.

of all selfishness into love, so full, so great, so undying, that never for one moment, through all eternity, they would think of themselves again.

¶ Some superfine individuals have called the religion of Christ vulgar because it cannot trust to its own intrinsic excellence, but must encourage its supporters by the promise of rewards. But in answer to this objection on the part of exquisitely and delicately made natures, let me say, in the language of one of my old teachers, there is no fear of becoming vulgar in the company of Christ, who not only promised rewards to His followers, but Himself worked and suffered under the spur of reward; for do we not read, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down in the majesty of the heavens"?[1]

1. The promise is very full and very rich. This *crown* that He promises is the crown of royalty. It is more. It is the crown of royalty victorious. It is still more. It is the chaplet that adorns the brow of the victor who comes laden with spoils, the crown of royalty, the crown of victory, the crown of added wealth. It is the crown of life, life which reigns because it has won, and reigns moreover in possession of spoils obtained through conflict. The life is the crown. What wondrous light this flings back upon the process! This pressure of tribulation is not accidental and capricious. Out of the tribulation we shall have our triumph. Out of the darkness we shall come to light. That is the whole philosophy of suffering. When presently all the tribulation is passed, and the painful processes of the little while are over, and the last grim pressure ceases, then we shall be crowned with life, then we shall know the meaning of life.

¶ O that thou wouldest understand the great good of Tribulation! This it is which blots out sins, cleanses the soul, and produces Patience: this in Prayer inflames it, enlarges it, and causes it to exercise the most sublime act of Charity; this rejoices the Soul, brings it near to God, causes it to be called, and to enter, into Heaven. This it is which tries the true Servants of God, and renders them wise, valiant, and constant. This it is which makes God hear them with speed. . . . It is this which Annihilates, Refines, and Perfects them: and finally, it is this which of earthly, makes Heavenly Souls, and of human, Divine;

[1] H. F. Henderson, *The Eye Witnesses of Christ*, 144.

transforming them, and uniting them in a wonderful way with the Lord's Humanity and Divinity.[1]

2. Notice the compensation! "Be thou faithful unto *death*, and I will give thee the crown of *life*." What thou sacrificest thou shalt receive again. And that is not all. The life received is not the equivalent of the life that has been given up. The life that is placed on the victor's brow is not a duplicate of the life that was laid down on this earth. This poor life laid down is not of so much value after all; at best it soon passes away, and is very superficial and frail. All the glory of it is as grass, and "all the goodliness of it as the flower of the field." But the life that is won through the sacrifice of this life is a life eternal, profound, joyous, infinitely great and glorious—a life in some wonderful way like the life of God Himself.

¶ "A crown of life."—Of what fashion shall such a crown be? St. Paul speaks of an amaranthine crown, contrasting it with earth's fading crowns of victory. And later in this Book of Revelation we read of crowns of gold.

We may hope to discern in celestial crowns every adornment of all possible crowns. Gracefulness of leaves, loveliness of flowers, endearment (if I may call it so) of tendrils, permanence of gold, lustre and tints of jewels. Such crowns I hope to see on heads I have venerated and loved here.

Meanwhile, because our dear Lord, flower of humankind and comparable with fine gold (though fine gold sufficeth not to compare with Him), was contented on earth to be crowned with a crown of thorns; let us be patient, contented, thankful, to wait on in hopes of a crown of life and glory.[2]

3. Do not forget the Giver. "*I* will give thee." Jesus Christ is to be the rewarder of men. It is from Him the gift must come, because, after all, it is a *gift*. We cannot merit it or obtain it in any way except as a free gift. It will no doubt bear some proportion to the life we have lived, and the victories we have won, but, after all, we cannot earn it. It is infinitely more than we could have earned or merited. It was earned on the cross. But whatever our future glory shall be, it must come from Jesus Christ; and "all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth."

[1] Michael de Molinos, *The Spiritual Guide*.

[2] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 65.

¶ William Hunter, the martyr apprentice of Brentwood in Essex, was executed at his native village on 26th March 1555. He was allowed to converse with his friends beforehand in the parlour of the Swan Inn. His father prayed that he might continue to the end in the way that he had begun. His mother said she was happy to bear a child who could find in his heart to lose his life for Christ's sake. "Mother," he answered, "for my little pain which I shall suffer, which is but a short braid, Christ hath promised me a crown of joy. May you not be glad of that, mother?"[1]

4. Are we counted so capable of faithfulness of heart that God believes we shall despise the rewards of the world in comparison with the spirit of Christ offered to us and the life in it as reward? Is it possible that God believes in us so much as to expect of us faithfulness unto death? Have we truly a Father whose care is our perfection, a Saviour who is watching us daily that we may be freed from sin; and can we, so weak, so much the creatures of impulse, so vain, so wavering, be faithful unto death? It is an inspiring thought that God can believe in us so much. We are not called on to face the lions for our faith. But there are things in life which are death—even worse than death itself; there are pains as deep as those the martyrs bore which we have to bear in silence, with no encouragement but the voice of God within, and that voice we do not always hear. There are wild contests we have sometimes to wage alone, night after night, day after day, when it seems that the inner conflict must become known to all around us, so vivid is our consciousness of it; and yet we know that there is no help in man for us, that we must conquer (if we conquer) in a solitude of heart which makes life as ghastly as a cruel dream. Then it is something to recall this text, and let the noble words sound in our ears their cry to courage and their promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life!"

The sharpest trials of life may not be ours, though few there are who do not touch one or another; but, even without them, there are difficulties enough in ordinary life to try our fidelity to God. When we have to go on day by day, contending with a passionate or a sluggish nature—limiting the one, enkindling

[1] J. A. Froude, *History of England*, v. 507.

the other—meeting small temptations every hour, so that watchfulness must never be relaxed; when no sooner is one wrongdoing laid in the grave than another rises up, so that the sword of life is never in the scabbard; when we know that this will go on for years till death comes—then, not to give way to angry weariness, not to brood over the battle, but to take it frankly as it comes, as part of the day's work; to make of high endeavour an inward light "which makes the path before us always bright"; to conquer the chill of custom and the weight of commonplace, and be inspired always by an inward thought; to pour into life such love of God and man that all things will grow beautiful and worthy to be done; and to look forward, persevering to the last—

From well to better, daily self-surpast,

this is to be faithful unto death, and for these things there is "the crown of life."

¶ Wherever a man's post is, whether he has chosen it of his own will, or whether he has been placed at it by his commander, there it is his duty to remain and face the danger, without thinking of death, or of any other thing, except dishonour.[1]

¶ I rejoiced in God, and made my complaint to Him, because He permitted me to undergo such afflictions; yet the recompense was great; for almost always, afterwards, His mercies descended upon me in great abundance. The soul seemed to come forth as gold out of the crucible, most refined, and made glorious to behold, our Lord dwelling within it. These trials afterwards are light, though they once seemed to be unendurable; and the soul longs to undergo them again, if that be more pleasing to our Lord. And though trials and persecutions increase, yet, if we bear them without offending our Lord, rejoicing in suffering for His sake, it will be all the greater gain.[2]

¶ A missionary is seated in the courtyard of an Indian house. In a circle opposite is a native family—husband, wife, sister, and some children. They are the first-fruits of a year's toil in Armur, and have come now for the seal and test of their faith—baptism.

"Why do you wish baptism?" we asked of them.

"Because we belong to Jesus. Did not He die for us? We are His."

"But if you are baptized, great trouble will assuredly come.

[1] Plato, *The Apology of Socrates*, cap. 16 (Church's trans., p. 56).

[2] *The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus* (ed. 1911), 278.

You will be out-casted. When neglected and persecuted by old friends what will you do?"

"We believe in Him. Will He not help us?"

"How long will you serve Him?"

Glad and spontaneous was the answer from all three: "Chachudaka—Till death."[1]

Triumphant Love, oh, keep us pure
By Thine own passion to endure,
Till every heart in Thine shall beat—
Our Sun, our Shadow from the heat—
And no false sun or shade allure!

Let never a dream of hate immure
Our life within its prison secure,
Nor Self its treadmill-round repeat,
  Triumphant Love!

If Thou to hardship now enure
The soul, in this life's overture
To greater music, we entreat
That we, through darkness, death, defeat,
May triumph in Thy triumph sure,
  Triumphant Love![2]

[1] G. M. Kerr, in *The Foreign Field*, Dec. 1910.

[2] Annie Matheson, *Maytime Songs*, 15.

Victory and Intimacy.

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Victory and Intimacy.

To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.—Rev. ii. 17.

The Church at Pergamum, to which this promise is addressed, had a sharper struggle than fell to the lot of the two Churches whose epistles precede this. It was set "where Satan's seat is." Pergamum was a special centre of heathen worship, and already the blood of a faithful martyr had been shed in it.

There were two houses in the city which represented the two forces that made life a battle for the Christian. One was the Church of Christ, and the other was the temple of idolatry. Heathen vice and heathen pleasure had such a sway in Pergamum that it seemed to be Satan's capital. In the palace of the idol the Adversary's throne was set and his court gathered. All that was grand and popular and pleasant was on the side of evil. When a man left that gorgeous temple in the great square he left everything that appealed to ease and pride and ambition. When he entered the poor little church in the back lane he entered into conflict with his heart and with the world. That single renunciation of the sweets and successes of life was but the beginning of the strife. In the church itself were some who taught that the Christian need not break with his former life in choosing Christ. Let us say to ourselves that the idol is nothing, and so let us go to the temple feasts, and take part in the foul and wild joys of the heathen. Let us be friendly with the people, and bring no unnecessary hardships on ourselves.

At once we see that the dingy, hidden church is, indeed, the portal of the one true temple, all glorious and eternal. Let these worshippers of the Christ be faithful to Him, and soon they shall pass in and be at home there. Let them keep from the meats of the idol shrine, and they shall feast on the best in the house of

God. Let them refuse to be votaries of the foul altar, and they shall be very priests of the Holy of Holies. Let them forgo the society of the heathen, and they shall be the close and particular friends of Him who is the visible Divinity of the heavenly sanctuary. They shall be fed with "hidden manna"; they shall receive "a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it."

I.

The Hidden Manna.

"To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna."

1. The reference is to the golden pot of manna which was preserved in the ark, under the mercy-seat, along with Aaron's rod and the tables of the covenant. The manna was taken from off the sand of the desert, put into an urn, and placed, for all ages, in the Holy of Holies, in remembrance of the desert food, and as a type of something better yet to be revealed.

This hidden manna was both like and unlike the manna of the wilderness; it was connected with it, yet also separate. It was of heaven originally (John vi. 31); it came down to earth; it was taken into the holiest of all, the emblem of the heaven of heavens; thus it was both of earth and of heaven. It was of the wilderness, yet not in it. It was originally corruptible, yet made incorruptible; once a daily gift, spread over all the sand of the desert, now gathered into one small vessel, and laid up there once for all. It was in the ark, covered with the blood, beneath the cherubim and the glory; food that could be reached only through blood, and could be only for those whom blood had redeemed. Man had eaten "angels' food"; but now this had become the food of men—not only of men here, in weakness and wandering, but also of the glorified in the New Jerusalem.

2. Those who remember with what fulness St. John, and he alone, records the teaching in which his Master claimed to be the Bread of God, the living bread that came down from heaven, of which, if a man ate, he should live for ever, as contrasted with the manna in the wilderness, which had no power to save from death,

will be ready to admit that the words now before us must have recalled that teaching, and that the manna which was to be the reward of the conqueror was the fruition of the ineffable sweetness of that Divine presence. Those who resisted the temptation to join the idol's feast in the idol's temple should be admitted to that heavenly feast in the eternal temple, which was also the palace of the great King.

The food of God is thus set over against forbidden food. The Christians here first addressed had eaten food offered to idols. In opposition to this is the promise of the "hidden manna." "Not as the world giveth give I unto you." Christ contrasts the world's food, as that which never satisfies, with His love and sympathy, which alone satisfy the cravings of the soul.

¶ In course of one of his Sunday evening addresses to the students of Edinburgh University, Professor Drummond remarked: "I was talking last Sunday to a man who said that though he could live for Christ at the close of the meetings, or could even for a month or so keep straight, yet after that his new life went down and was lost. Now, this proves two things. It proves the possibility of a man living for Christ and keeping straight under suitable conditions, and it proves also that if a man tries living without the Bread of Life he will flag and die. You can't live on air. You can't live on one another. You can't live on what I say; but you can live on the Bread of Life, which is Jesus Christ. The problem of Nutrition is the fundamental problem of physiology, the fundamental problem of living beings. So exactly is it the fundamental problem of the Christian life."

He then drew a long analogy between physical and spiritual nutrition in the terms of physiology. "But the closest parallel I can draw is that which we see in life and read of in tales, where one man is the sustenance and life of another, or more often where a woman is the sustenance and help of a man. Something which is very pure, which is fresh, which is high and lofty—why, it throws an influence around the base life which elevates and ennobles that miserable life to the level of its own. Not in a day. Not in a year. But in a long continuous process which works unseen. How is it done? By abiding in the presence of that which is pure and noble. One life affects the other, and the weak becomes stimulated and roused; *there* are the elements of growth. So a man who abides in the presence of Jesus Christ in some mystical way appropriates, unconsciously and unavoidably, the life and character of Christ, so that he is built up like Him. That

is the whole process. It is perfectly simple and perfectly natural. The point of importance is this, that it is quite impossible to go on at all in the spiritual life without living in the immediate presence and fellowship of Christ. This is to reach the Supreme. This is to be nourished and strengthened for life."[1]

How richly in the desert Israel fared,
By God's own hand with food angelic fed,
Which with the dew around the camp was shed.
That other dew, brow-drenching, they were spared
In tilling thorn-cursed ground—sad burden shared
By all for Adam's sin; but ate their "bread,"
As from a table in the desert spread,
"Without their labour," or their thought, "prepared."
So God's salvation, the true bread from heaven,
In rich completeness is before us set,
Fresh with the Spirit's dew, and freely given:
But not without the labour of Another,
Toils, tears, and thorny crown, and bloody sweat,
Of Him who is God's Fellow and man's Brother.[2]

3. The sustenance promised to the conqueror is hidden food. When the manna was given to the Israelites a golden vessel full of it was stored in or near the ark. When the first Temple perished, the rumour ran that the ark of the covenant, and the objects associated with it, had not really perished. No one knows what became of the ark. It is mentioned in the days of Solomon (1 Kings viii. 21), and after that not at all in the historical part of the Old Testament. But the Jewish tale ran, and still runs, that when the first Temple perished under Nebuchadnezzar the ark had escaped the fate of the other vessels of the house of God, which were carried to Babylon, and had been successfully hidden in one of the thousand caves with which the limestone rock of Palestine is honey-combed, where still, if the tradition be true, it may await a chance discovery. St. John's readers would be perfectly familiar with the tale, for it stood in their Bibles though it does not stand in ours. The Book of the Maccabees tells that "Jeremiah came and found a chamber in the rocks, and there he brought in the tabernacle, and the ark, and the altar of incense, and he made fast the door. And some of those that

[1] G. A. Smith, *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 493.
[2] Richard Wilton.

followed with him came there that they might mark the way and could not find it. But when Jeremiah perceived it he blamed them, saying, 'Yea, and the place shall be unknown until God shall gather the people together again and mercy come; and then shall the Lord disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord shall be seen, and the cloud.'"

We can see, then, what the promise of the hidden manna would mean to these Jewish Christians—for most of St. John's readers, no doubt, were Jews—God's secret known, the ark revealed, the scattered people of Israel gathered together again, the Bread of Life restored to them, but restored in truer fashion, for their "fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead," but Christ had promised that "My Father shall give you the bread of heaven. . . . I am the bread of life . . . he that cometh unto me shall not hunger."

(1) The manna was in its very nature and origin something hidden, something unknown and wonderful. The name is supposed to be derived from the wondering question of the Israelites as they saw the strange thing lie on the ground: "Manna?" or "What now? What is it?" It was *like* coriander seed, sweet as honey; but what it actually *was* Israel never learned to know. It fell for nearly forty years with the dew from the womb of the morning, a gift direct from the hand of God. It came from the storehouse of heaven, where it lay hid with God, and this was all that the people knew of its origin; and in this very ignorance was certified to them this glorious fact that it was inexhaustible, a supply measured by no breadth or fertility of corn-fields.

Silently it fell,
Whence, no man might tell,
Like good dreams from heaven
Unto mortals given,
Like a snowy flock
Of strange sea-birds alighting on a shore of rock;
Silent thus and bright
Fell the manna in the night.

Silently thus and bright,
In our starless night,
God's sweet mercy comes
All about our homes;

Whence, no man can see,
In a soft shower drifting, drifting ceaselessly.
Till the morning light
Falls the manna in the night.

Thus His mercy's crown,
Bread of life, came down;
At our doors it fell,
Whence, no man might tell,
Silent to the ground;
Softly shining thus through the darkness all around,
Snowy, pure, and white,
Fell the manna in the night.

(2) Jesus, whom the manna typifies, is now hidden from view. The manna was there in the golden pot, and kept in the Holy of Holies, and miraculously preserved from year to year, so that it saw no corruption. The people had never seen it, neither had the priests, neither are we told that the high priest ever did, on that one day in the year when he entered that inner sanctuary. What a thrilling figure of Him who said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." He is our "hidden Manna" which saw no corruption. He has entered, not the Holy of Holies that was here on earth, but heaven itself. He is laid up for us in heaven. He is hidden from us now, even Him whom having not seen we love. But presently we who are made by Him priests unto God and His Father shall have boldness through His blood to enter into the Holiest. Then we shall see the now "hidden Manna," then feast our eyes and hearts on the sight of our glorified Saviour. Then the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and lead us to the living fountains, *i.e.*, the very springs and source of life. So that then we "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." The "hidden Manna" shall then be revealed; the Lamb shall be our light, and our God our glory.

¶ The suggestion of mystery in this "hidden manna" was calculated to arouse the immediate interest of the Christians of Pergamum. For this was known as the City of Mystery. Its tutelary divinity, Aesculapius, was worshipped under the symbol of a serpent. It is said that the porches of his temple were crowded in the night-time with worshippers tarrying there in the hope of having dreams and visions. Pergamum was the centre of

the Oriental occultism of those days. Its merchants carried on a profitable business in charms, amulets and cabalistic letters. Its smooth sheep-skins were famous the world over as *Pergamenae chartae*, which we have shortened into "parchment."[1]

II.

The White Stone.

"And I will give him a white stone."

Commentators differ as to the meaning of the "white stone," and Dr. Maclaren came at length to regard it as the mere vehicle for the name, with possibly some subsidiary thought of innocence and purity. Perhaps the language is vague and indefinite just because it means and hides so much.

1. The giving of the stone is evidently *a mark of the highest distinction*, and there is much to be said for the view that the reference is to splendid gems, called Urim and Thummim (that is, lights and perfectnesses), enclosed within the folds of the high priest's breastplate which none but the high priest ever beheld.

The white stone which Jesus bestows excels the Old Testament gems. The Urim and Thummim were but dead stones, and lay but on the breast. They were but outward symbols of God. This white stone is lustrous with the very light which is God, and it is hidden within the breast itself. The upshining of faith, the far-darting beams of hope, and the outspreading glow of love are glories born of God's own glory. A Divine nature begins at the centre of the human nature. And as the Christian obeys it, it grows. As he wars against his evil loves and ambitions, a strange, sweet light dawns in the secret of his heart. To his gladdened eyes there is revealed a purity and a beauty not there of old, and not given by any hand but God's. However tiny and dim that gem may be, as his eye lights on it he knows it to be the diamond of a Godlike goodness. He knows by that token that he is now a priest. However unfit, and however slackly he uses his grand privileges, he has the loftiest dignity open to mortal. He wears

[1] D. J. Burrell, *The Cloister Book*, 46.

the veil through which the inner splendour glimmers, and the eternal voices are faintly heard. Soon with wondering awe, but no fear, he shall pass within and be for ever with the Lord.

¶ The hidden manna and the white stone are not merely united in time, belonging both to the wilderness period of the history of God's people; they are united as both representing high-priestly prerogatives, which the Lord should at length impart to all His people, kings and priests to God, as He will then have made them all. If any should be privileged to eat of the hidden manna, who but the High Priest, who alone had entrance into the Holy Place where it was laid up? If any should have knowledge of what was graven on the Urim, who but the same High Priest, in whose keeping it was, and who was bound by his very office to consult it? The mystery of what was written there, shut to every other, would be open to him.[1]

2. But there is another suggestion. In ancient times the white stone was often *the symbol of acquittal.* In the symbolism of colours, which, as having its ultimate root in the impression of pain or pleasure made upon the senses, might almost be called natural, and is, as a matter of fact, all but universal, white, in its brightness and purity, had been associated with joy and gladness, with victory and triumph. So, in a practice which, though originating, it was said, with the half-civilized tribes of Thrace or Scythia, had become general, days of festivity were noted with a white, those of calamity with a black, stone. Thus, when the vote of an assembly as to the guilt of an accused person was by ballot, white stones were the symbol of acquittal, black of condemnation. It has, accordingly, been contended, with at least much plausibility, that this is the significance of the "white stone" in the promise now before us. The conqueror in the great strife with evil, whatever opprobrium he might incur in the sight of men, whatever sentence he might receive at the hands of an earthly judge, would be received as justified and acquitted by the Eternal Judge. Yet, on the other hand, it can scarcely be said that the symbol of a mere acquittal would be an adequate expression of the reward promised to him that overcometh. A verdict of "not guilty," which, on this interpretation, would exhaust the meaning of the promise, could hardly take its place as co-ordinate

[1] R. C. Trench.

with the "crown of life," or with "the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God."

¶ The Greek commentator Andreas sees allusion in the words white stone to the white pebble, by placing which in the ballot-box the Greek judges pronounced the sentence of acquittal (ψῆφοι σώζουσαι, they were therefore called), as by the black of condemnation; a custom expressed in the well-known lines of Ovid (*Metam.* xv. 41, 42):

> Mos erat antiquus, niveis atrisque lapillis,
> His damnare reos, illis absolvere culpae.

But, not to speak of a grave fault common to this and almost every other explanation of these words which is offered, this one is manifestly inadequate; the absolving pebble was not *given to* the acquitted, as this is to the victor, nor was there any name written upon it.[1]

3. Once more the reference may be to the *tessera hospitalis*, the tally or *token of hospitality* employed by the ancients. At a time when houses of public entertainment were less common, private hospitality was the more necessary. When one person was received kindly by another, or a contract of friendship was entered into, the *tessera* was given. It was so named from its shape, being four-sided; it was sometimes of wood, sometimes of stone; it was divided into two by the contracting parties; each wrote his own name on half of the *tessera*; then they exchanged pieces, and therefore the name or device on the piece of *tessera* which each received was the name the other person had written upon it, and which no one else knew but he who received it. It was carefully prized, and entitled the bearer to protection and hospitality.

Some such *tessera*, or ticket—a stone with the name of the guest written on it—was given to those who were invited to partake, within the precincts of the temple, of the feast that consisted wholly, or in part, of the meat that had been offered as a sacrifice. On this view the second part of the promise is brought into harmony with the first, and is made more directly appropriate: he who had the courage to refuse that *tessera* to the feast which defiled should receive another that would admit him to the supper of the Great King.

[1] R. C. Trench.

¶ Plautus, in one of his plays, refers to this custom. Hanno inquires of a stranger where he may find Agorastocles, and discovers to his surprise that he is addressing the object of his search.

"If so," he says, "compare, if you please, this hospitable *tessera*; here it is: I have it with me."

Agorastocles replies, "It is the exact counterpart; I have the other part at home."

Hanno responds, "O my friend! I rejoice to meet thee; thy father was my friend, my guest; I divided with him this hospitable *tessera*."

"Therefore," said Agorastocles, "thou shalt have a home with me, for I reverence hospitality."

4. Closely associated with the stone of hospitality was the *stone of friendship*. It was a tender custom in classic times which has not quite died out of a prosaic modern world. Two friends would sometimes plight friendship in a beautiful way by dividing between them a small tablet, oftenest in the form of a small piece of white marble or ivory. It is done sometimes to-day, at all events in country districts, with a ring. Each portion of the broken tablet bore upon it a symbol known only to the friends. When once this token had been given or received, the friends were bound to one another for ever, and not for life only, for the broken fragments could be handed from father to son, and no matter how many generations had passed, if the holder of one half of the tablet presented it to the holder of the other half, he could claim from him shelter, protection, defence in the courts of law against all adversaries, and every privilege that the first holder could have claimed. So Christ seems to say, He that conquers shall plight troth with Me. He and I will break the tablet of friendship together. We will bind ourselves together for time and for eternity, "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health." If he claims My help he shall have it, freely, ungrudgingly. I will be his Friend in everything. He shall live with Me. We will sup together. I will divide all I have with him. All the treasures of God shall be his. All that is Mine shall be his.

¶ There is a lovely German poem of the Middle Ages, by one Wernher, which has not yet found a translator. It is something like this—

Thou art mine and I am Thine,
I will make Thee sure of that,
I will lock Thee in my heart,
I will close its outer door,
I will lose its little key,
Thou canst then no more depart.[1]

¶ In his notes of 1854 Ruskin says: "This holding the name in the white stone is very suggestive as well as mysterious. In one sense the White Stone may be the Heart—always a stone, compared to what it ought to be; yet a white one when it holds Christ ('Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God')."[2]

5. Above all else the white stone is *a sign of public honour.* It is given to "him that overcometh." And so it has been suggested that the reference is to the gladiatorial combats which were so marked a feature of classic times. They took place in those huge amphitheatres which are to-day more wonderful in their ruins than most modern buildings in their completeness. In them, as in all shows, there were honoured seats, and among these were places for old gladiators, heroes of the arena, who in many a fight had won the title to rest. The diploma of these heroes was a white stone, and on it was engraved the number of the victories its possessor had won and the names of the victims he had slain. So, it has been suggested, when life's long battle is won, Christ will give His heroes (gladiators in a far nobler warfare, gladiators in the struggle with sin) a white stone of victory, a title of admission to a place, and a place of special honour, in the "cloud of witnesses."

He who held this stone was entitled to be supported at the public expense, had free access to all the festivities of the nation, and was regarded as illustrious in all great gatherings. Thus he who wins the moral battle of life will be publicly honoured. A crown of glory is prepared for him, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give unto him at that day. He will have free admission into all the honours of eternity.

¶ The Saxon name of the family was originally spelt Livingstone, but the Doctor's father had shortened it by the omission of the final "e." David wrote it for many years in the

[1] W. P. Workman, in *A Book of Lay Sermons*, 156.
[2] Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, vii. § 23 (*Works*, xxix. 302).

abbreviated form, but about 1857, at his father's request, he restored the original spelling. The significance of the original form of the name was not without its influence on him. He used to refer with great pleasure to a note from an old friend and fellow-student, the late Professor George Wilson of Edinburgh, acknowledging a copy of his book in 1857:—"Meanwhile, may your name be propitious; in all your long and weary journeys may the *Living* half of your title outweigh the other; till after long and blessed labours, the white *stone* is given you in the happy land."[1]

¶ In *The Book of the Sparkling Stone* the subject is the mysterious stone of which the Spirit says in the Apocalypse: *Et dabo illi (vincenti) calculum candidum, et in calculo nomen novum scriptum, quod nemo scit nisi qui accepit* (Rev. ii. 17). This stone, according to the monk of the forest of Soignes, is the symbol of Christ, given to His loved ones only, and like a flame which images the love of the eternal Word. And then again we have glimpses of those dark shadows of love, from which break forth uninterrupted sobs of light, seen in awful flowers through the gradual expansions of contemplation and above the strange verdure of an unequalled gladness.[2]

Have you not heard
  Of the fair white stone,
With its written word
  By one soul known,
  And the Lord alone?[3]

III.

The New Name.

"And upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it."

1. The ideal function of a name is to give an accurate and complete description of the thing that it denotes. Of course names are, practically, very far from performing this function, and the names applied to individuals very often express anything but the truth. But the metaphor of the text is based on the ideal

[1] W. G. Blaikie, *The Personal Life of David Livingstone* (ed. 1880), 2.
[2] M. Maeterlinck, *Ruysbroeck and the Mystics*, 78.
[3] Emily Hickey.

name, and not the actual. It is in this way that we are to interpret such phrases as "the name of Jesus" and "the name of God." It means the essential life of Jesus, of God, and all the relations that this life assumes. But we must not fall into the mistake of thinking that the "name" denotes a bundle of abstract qualities, which you may separate from the actual living person. It is rather the person in the totality of his life and its manifestations. The life that manifests the qualities is essential to the name.

¶ The readers of this letter, who possessed the key to its comprehension, hidden from the common world, could not fail to be struck with the analogy between this New Name and the Imperial title Augustus. That also had been a new name, deliberately devised by the Senate to designate the founder, and to mark the foundation of the new Empire: it was an old sacred word, used previously only in the language of the priests, and never applied to any human being: hence Ovid says: "Sancta vocant *augusta* patres" (*Fast.*, i. 609). That old word was appropriated in 27 B.C. to the man who had been the saviour of Rome, and whom already the popular belief had begun to regard as an incarnation of the Divine nature in human form, sent down to earth to end the period of war and introduce the age of peace. This sacred, Divine name marked out the man to whom it was applied as one apart from the world, standing on a higher level, possessor of superhuman power in virtue of this new name and transmitting that power through the name to his descendants.

The analogy was striking; and the points of difference were only to the advantage of the Christian. His new name was secret, but all the more efficacious on that account. The readers for whom this letter was written—the Christians of Pergamum, of all Asia, of the whole world—would catch with certainty the hidden meaning. All those Christians, when they were victorious, were to be placed in the same position as, or rather higher than, Augustus, having a New Name, the Name of God, their own secret possession, which no man would know and therefore no man could tamper with by acquiring control through knowledge. As Augustus had been set above the Roman world by his new name, so they would be set above the world by theirs.[1]

2. The name, then, expresses the character, the nature, the being, the *meaning* of the person who bears it. It is the man's

[1] W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, 310.

own symbol,—his soul's picture, in a word,—the sign which belongs to him and to no one else. Who can give a man this, his own, name? God alone. For no one but God sees what the man is, or even, seeing what he is, could express in a name-word the sum and harmony of what He sees. To whom is this name given? To him that overcometh. When is it given? When he has overcome. Does God then not know what a man is going to become? As surely as He sees the oak which He put there lying in the heart of the acorn. Why then does He wait till the man has become by overcoming ere He settles what his name shall be? He does not wait; He knows his name from the first. But—although repentance comes because God pardoned—as the man becomes aware of the pardon only in the repentance, so it is only when the man has become his name that God gives him the stone with the name upon it, for then first can he understand what his name signifies. It is the blossom, the perfection, the completion, that determines the name; and God foresees that from the first, because He made it so; but the tree of the soul, before its blossom comes, cannot understand what blossom it is to bear, and could not know what the word meant, which, in representing its own unattained completeness, named itself. Such a name cannot be given until the man *is* the name.

¶ My heart was tender and often contrite, and universal love to my fellow-creatures increased in me. This will be understood by such as have trodden in the same path. Some glances of real beauty may be seen in their faces who dwell in true meekness. There is a harmony in the sound of that voice to which Divine love gives utterance, and some appearance of right order in their temper and conduct whose passions are regulated; yet these do not fully show forth that inward life to those who have not felt it; this white stone and new name is only known rightly by such as receive it.[1]

3. The "new name" had been used by Isaiah and Jeremiah for expressing the new life of blessedness in store for those to whom it was applied. The land that had been forsaken and abandoned to destruction should be called "Hephzibah," as once more delight of her Lord. The daughter of Zion, that had sat desolate as a widow, should be "Beulah," as a bride over whom

[1] *The Journal of John Woolman* (ed. 1903), 48.

the bridegroom once more rejoiced. Jerusalem herself was to be known by the mystic name of "The Lord our Righteousness." In his own case and that of his brother, as in that of Simon Barjona —in Peter, the "Rock," and Boanerges, the "Sons of Thunder"— the Apostle had known a new name given which was the symbol of a higher life and a character idealized in its gifts. And so in this case the inner truth that lies below the outward imagery would seem to be that the conqueror, when received at the heavenly feast, should find upon the stone, or *tessera*, that gave him the right of entrance a "new name," the token of a character transformed and perfected, a name the full significance of which should be known only to him who was conscious of the transformation, just as in the experiences of our human life, "the heart knoweth its own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy."

¶ When little children are baptized they receive a name, inalienable. Its possession means "given to God." Our surname is our old name. Our baptismal name, the name suggestive of our new nature is our new name for earth. When admitted into heaven, we shall receive a new name, Christ's name and ours. "I will write upon him mine own new name."

When the angels that await me,
Meet me at my entering in,
With what name of love and music
Will their welcoming begin?
Not the name so dimmed with earth stains,
Linked with thoughts of grief and pain,
No, the name which mortals give me
Will not be my angel name.[1]

4. The new name becomes ours by communication from Christ "I will give him a new name"—a deeper, a more inward, a fresh knowledge and revelation of My own character—as eternal love, eternal wisdom, all-sufficient, absolute power, the home and treasure and joy and righteousness of the whole heart and spirit. That is the representation uniformly given in Scripture with regard to all the change and glorifying of human nature which follows upon the entrance into the life beyond. It is ever set forth as being the consequence of a fuller knowledge and general

[1] A. W. Lewis.

possession of the name—the manifested character of Jesus Christ our Lord. The words of the Apostle John, who wrote the Apocalypse, mean the same thing without metaphor, as his words here in their metaphor: "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

¶ The name is inscribed upon the beholder as the sun makes an image of itself on the photographic plate. If thou wouldest see Christ, thou must be as Christ; if thou wouldest be as Christ, thou must see Christ. "We all, with unveiled faces mirroring," as a glass does, "the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image."[1]

5. This new name is known only to its possessor. That, of course, is true in all regions of human experience. Did ever anybody describe a taste so that a man that had not tasted the thing could tell what it was like? Did ever anybody describe an odour so as to do more than awaken the memory of someone who had once had the scent lingering in his nostrils? Have all the poets who have been singing from the beginning of the world described love and sorrow, joy and hope and fear, so as to do more than kindle the reminiscences of men as to their own sorrows and joys? If he has not known the love of a child, no talking will ever make a man understand what a father's heart is. Religious experiences are not unlike ordinary human experiences in this matter. It is not possible to communicate them, partly because of the imperfection of human language, partly because we need in all departments sympathy and prior knowledge in order to make the descriptions significant at all.

We have our own heart, with its own love and its own aspirations. We have our own tasks and responsibilities and failings. Hence our need of God is not the need of any other soul; it is just our own need that He meets, and so we have our own special view and experience of Him. The harder, the stranger, our lot may be, the more distinct are our dealings with Him to whom we pray, on whose Spirit we depend, in whose goodness we are being exercised. We cling to Him, not as the great God of all, but as our own Father, in whose heart we have our own place, and into whose character we have our own insight.

Thus comes it that my own sense of God is a name for God

[1] A. Maclaren, *The Unchanging Christ*, 230.

known only to Him and to me. You would need my heart, my history, to be indeed myself, before you could understand all that I mean and feel when I say, "God, my Father."

¶ Nowhere do we find on earth that picture of society reconstructed by the idea of Jesus, society around the throne of God, which shines out upon us from the mysterious promises of the Apocalypse; the glory of which society is to be this—that while the souls stand in their vast choruses of hundreds of thousands, and all chant the same anthems and all work together in the same transcendent duties, yet each bears the sacred name written on the flesh of his own forehead, and carries in his hand a white stone, on which is written a new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. It is individuality emphasized by company, and not lost in it, because the atmosphere in which the company is met is the idea of Jesus, which is the fatherhood of God.[1]

¶ You would be ashamed not to know the name and use of every piece of furniture in the house, and we ought to be as familiar with every object in the world—which is only a larger kind of house. You recollect the pretty story of Pizarro and the Peruvian Inca: how the Inca asked one of the Spaniards to write the word *Dio* (God) upon his thumb-nail, and then, showing it to the rest, found only Pizarro unable to read it! Well, you will find as you grow older that this same name of God is written all over the world in little phenomena that occur under our eyes every moment, and I confess that I feel very much inclined to hang my head with Pizarro when I cannot translate these hieroglyphics into my own vernacular.[2]

O Name, all other names above,
What art Thou not to me,
Now I have learned to trust Thy love
And cast my care on Thee!

What is our being but a cry,
A restless longing still,
Which Thou alone canst satisfy,
Alone Thy fulness fill!

Thrice blessèd be the holy souls
That lead the way to Thee,
That burn upon the martyr-rolls
And lists of prophecy.

[1] Phillips Brooks, *The Influence of Jesus*, 99.
[2] *Letters of James Russell Lowell*, i. 182.

And sweet it is to tread the ground
O'er which their faith hath trod;
But sweeter far, when Thou art found,
The soul's own sense of God!

The thought of Thee all sorrow calms;
Our anxious burdens fall;
His crosses turn to triumph-palms,
Who finds in God his all.[1]

[1] Frederick Lucian Hosmer.

A Dead and Alive Church.

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A Dead and Alive Church.

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead.—Rev. iii. 1.

1. Sardis, the capital of the Lydian Empire, was one of the great cities of primitive history. It had been noted for its commercial prosperity; it had been an important centre of trade; its situation on a high plateau in a district of great natural fertility marked it out as a ruling city. Wool-dyeing was invented there, and its manufactures of rugs and carpets, the raw material for which was furnished by the vast flocks of Phrygia, were as noted in their day as Persian or Morocco carpets are in modern times. The gold-laden sands of the river Pactolus which flowed through the city, and deposits of the mysterious metal called electrum, together with the minting of gold and silver coin, which was there first carried out, added to the fame, wealth, and reputation of the city in which Crœsus, richest of kings, had ruled, the city which Solon, wisest of men, had visited, and where he had rightly augured ruin, because he had mistrusted material wealth as necessarily hollow and treacherous.

2. The natural position of Sardis on a high rocky bluff overlooking the plain of Hermus, and separated by a considerable depression from the mountain range behind, was such as to give it the reputation of being impregnable. On three sides of the city the cliff was understood to be unscaleable; it was only necessary to guard the "causeway" by which it was connected with other high ground behind, and that could be held by a score of men against thousands. An impregnable city, but one which had often been taken—that was Sardis. The first time it was captured was in the sixth century B.C. The army of Crœsus had suffered defeat beyond the Halys, at the hand of Cyrus, and though the

victorious enemy appeared before the walls of Sardis before a new army could be collected, neither Crœsus nor any of the inhabitants believed there was any danger of his penetrating their impregnable rock-fortress. The only way of approach, along the connecting isthmus, was strongly fortified and carefully guarded. The city slept securely. But accident or treachery revealed to the invaders the possibility of ascending the rock-face by some crack or ledge, the existence of which had been overlooked by the defenders. By this the soldiers of Cyrus clambered up, and Crœsus awoke to find his capital in the hands of the Persians. Cyrus had come upon Sardis "like a thief in the night."

¶ The Church is never in a more perilous state than when she has quiet and peace.[1]

3. Long afterwards in Greece the fate of Crœsus and of his city served to point the moral of overweening self-confidence and thoughtless security. But even the fact that it had thus become a proverb for foolish confidence did not save Sardis from suffering the same fate again, when, some three centuries later, it was captured by Antiochus through the exploit of the Cretan Lagoras, who climbed the steep hill and stole unobserved into the acropolis. For some time previous to the date of this letter to the Church at Sardis, the city had been slowly sinking in importance. Its manufactures and commercial position had been lost. Outdistanced by its younger rivals, Ephesus and Smyrna, on the sea-coast, it became a melancholy spectacle, a place of third-rate importance, unable to forget that it had once been chief. Even as a city, Sardis was pretentious and self-satisfied, yet moribund, having a "name to live" and yet dead. It was a city of failure; a city whose history blazoned forth the uncertainty of human fortunes, the weakness of human strength, and the shortness of the step that separates over-confident might from sudden and irreparable disaster; a city whose name was almost synonymous with pretensions unjustified, promise unfulfilled, appearance without reality, confidence that heralded ruin.

¶ I remember on my first landing at a place [in West Africa] where there are three small factories only, but which I had seen marked large on the map, asking a resident white if this was all

[1] Luther, *Table-Talk*.

the settlement. "Oh no!" said he, "this is only the porter's lodge; I'll show you the settlement," and he took me to the cemetery; that cemetery justified the large lettering on the map.[1]

4. The social history of Sardis finds a singularly close reflection in the history of the Church of Christ within its walls, so that the Apostle could point the moral of the one by using language which was suggested by, and suggested, the other. The city, though still a place of importance, was a city of the past, retaining the name of greatness, but decayed from its former estate. The words of the text are singularly appropriate to its history: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest, and thou art dead." The words are, of course, addressed to the Church of Sardis, and must be understood as describing its condition about 90–100 A.D., already decaying from its original high promise; but it seems clear that the writer must have been conscious of the historical parallel, and chose his words so as to express it. When he goes on to say, "Be thou watchful . . . for I have found no works of thine fulfilled. . . . If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee," one's thoughts are carried back to the two occasions when, through careless watching, the impregnable citadel failed to keep up its reputation and name and to fulfil its works.

¶ Living on one's reputation is a melancholy business. It is sad to see a threadbare merchant starving on the dwindling relics of his former fortune; to see the failing orator reproducing stale scraps of knowledge and rhetoric which once commanded applause; sad to listen to an old vocalist whose fame survives his voice; and saddest of all are those professors of religion who acquire no fresh strength and treasure, but who contrive to keep themselves in countenance by making the most of an ever attenuating reputation. We must not live in the opinion of others, but in our own rich and supporting consciousness; we must not live a fancied life in others' breath, but a real, true life in the purity and power of our own soul. It is not what we were, but what we are. How are things with us to-day? The true spiritual life is never merely retrospective. What am I now, and what my hope? Am I gaining victories, overtaking new work, attaining fresh graces, bringing forth fruit unto God?[2]

[1] Mary Kingsley, in *British Africa*, 379. [2] W. L. Watkinson.

¶ Obtain and preserve a reputation. It is the usufruct of fame. It is expensive to obtain a reputation, for it only attaches to distinguished abilities, which are as rare as mediocrities are common. Once obtained, it is easily preserved. It confers many an obligation, but it does more. When it is owing to elevated powers or lofty spheres of action, it rises to a kind of veneration and yields a sort of majesty. But it is only a well-founded reputation that lasts permanently.[1]

I.

A Church with a Name to Live.

1. Of the Angel of the Church at Sardis, and, by implication of the Society which he represented, it was said, "Thou hast a name that thou livest,"—and yet thou "art dead." Surely there never was a more terrible word than that. A name to live, and yet all the while dead! The nominal condition, we should all say, aggravates the actual. Better be dead, and know it, and wear no disguise, and practise no hypocrisy, than clothe the ghastly skeleton with the semblance of vitality, and be dead indeed while in name thou livest. Sardis, once a living Church, was now existing on the recollection of what it had been and done. It had kept the name and cherished traditions of the past; but its present character was poor and its experience low. How easy to keep the old, beautified, stirring names and cries when all the reality, force, and glow of their origin have perished! "Nominal" Christianity is a poor thing to live with. It is a poor thing in days of fierce temptation and of searching sorrow. In no days does it bring satisfaction to the heart. Nominal religion is a poor thing to die with. The mission of Christ is to bring in reality, to sweep away all mere semblances, artificialities, and names of religion; His one great purpose is to establish real relations between our soul and God. Alas for us if we have only the name of Christ! "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

¶ When the church of Sardis was really dead, the principal means of keeping it in that condition was the name it had to be alive.[2]

[1] Balthasar Gracian, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* (ed. 1892), 56. [2] John Owen.

¶ In Staffordshire it is interesting and amusing to mark the contrast between the names of the places and their actual character; Roseville, Swan Village, Daisy Bank, Bloomfield, Tividale, and so forth. Roseville is utterly innocent of the garden queen; Daisy Bank is a cinder heap; the last creature you would expect to see on the inky canal of Swan Village is the bird of snow; Tividale is a realm of furnaces and dirt; and many a summer has come and gone since Bloomfield smiled a field of flowers. Once it was a region of beauty, gardens, orchards, and dells; now slag, soot, and desolation mock its old poetic names. So it is sometimes with a Church. There is a startling, mournful contrast between its grand history, heroic workers, marked achievements, and its present poverty and deadness! Yet it lives on its splendid past, and flatters itself in the life and work of vanished generations.[1]

2. Sardis was renowned among men. The world looked, and beheld with admiration what was to it the splendour of her worship; it listened, and heard with enthusiasm the music of her praise. And the Church was pleased that it should be so. Not in humility, lowliness, and deeds of self-sacrificing love did she seek her "name," but in what the world would have been equally delighted with, though the inspiring soul of it all had been folly or sin. The fact that this Church should have had the name and fame of life is very startling, and may well summon each and all to an earnest heart-searching. There would be nothing nearly so startling, if Sardis had been counted by the Churches round about as a Church fallen into lethargy and hastening to death. But there is no appearance of the kind. Laodicea, we know, deceived herself, but nothing implies that she deceived others. She counted herself rich, when she was most poor; but there is no hint to make us think that others counted her so as well. Sardis, on the other hand, had a name that she lived, was well spoken of, regarded, we may well believe, as a model Church, and can therefore have been by no means wanting in the outer manifestations of spiritual life; while yet all these shows of life did but conceal the realities of death.

¶ The order of Discretion's questions [to Christian at the House Beautiful] is significant. First come those about his experience, and last that about his name. There are many people

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

whose first question is that of names. This is what they judge by and are interested in. A famous name telling of old family, or influence, or wealth is all that is needed for entrance to many a house of good society on earth. Here it is good to find in regard to all such matters the grand equality of the Church. Of lord and labourer alike it asks first—or ought to ask—not "What is thy name?" but "What has been thine experience?" and "What is the direction in which thy life is moving?"[1]

¶ It is quite possible that a Church may enjoy a high reputation for purity, spirituality, and efficiency—a reputation gained through years of faithfulness—and yet have entirely lost the attributes which once gained it credit. Some firms in the city are known throughout the world. They have been in existence for a century or more. They once brought out a valuable article, and forthwith did a large business; only their goods would do; they were known everywhere and realized immense fortunes. But to-day the old partners are dead, and the firm is a shadow of its old self. They no longer produce the superlative article; they simply trade on the old name. It is much the same sometimes with a religious community. Churches rise into being in conviction, faith, devotion, enthusiasm, and sacrifice; they attain a worthy fame; and their degenerate successors too often trade on the reputation enjoyed by a worldly and languishing denomination. So an individual may acquire in early years a high reputation for character and service, and then continue to live on such reputation, no longer doing the first works.[2]

¶ How men may become dead to the spirit of Christ's teaching while engaged in the holiest offices, and betray His cause while outwardly reverencing His name, is illustrated in a picture by the Hon. John Collier, which was exhibited in the Academy of 1896. The picture illustrates an incident in the life of Pope Urban VI., related in Lea's *History of the Inquisition*. Hearing of a conspiracy among his cardinals, the Pope invited the ringleaders to his country residence, the Castle of Nocera, when he put them to excruciating tortures to extract from them the details of the conspiracy. Urban VI. walked to and fro in the garden beneath the window of the torture-chamber reciting his breviary aloud to encourage the torturers in their work. The artist has depicted him walking beneath, clad in the garments of his holy office, reading earnestly from his manual of devotion, and using it for such diabolic ends as to encourage the fiendish cruelty going on above. With keen irony the painter has filled the little side-walk alongside of which the Pope treads with white lilies—emblem of

[1] J. Kelman, *The Road*, i. 100. [2] W. L. Watkinson.

purity. A peacock, the symbol of eternity, is seen sculptured on the walls, while over the window of the torture-chamber there is engraven a cross.[1]

3. The symptom which is singled out in the letter to the Church as characterizing its condition is what we should call slackness, ineffectiveness. "I have found no works of thine fulfilled before my God." Works were not wanting; but all alike were branded with incompleteness, perfunctoriness, unreality. There had been a serious slackening of moral fibre, an inclination to slur over the distinctions between the standard of Christ and the standard of the world, and to fling away some of the distinctive practices and forms of self-denial which were provided as safeguards of the specifically Christian character. Sardis had been too much for them; its atmosphere of self-pleasing, of self-indulgence, had poisoned the well-springs of their faith, making it sickly, feeble, and ineffective. Instead of their overcoming the world, the world had overcome them.

The Church in Sardis had no heresies needing correction. It had not life enough to produce even such morbid secretions. Neither weeds nor flowers grow in winter. There may be a lower depth than the condition of things when people are all thinking, and some of them thinking wrongly, about Christian truth. Better the heresies of Ephesus and Thyatira than the acquiescent deadness of Sardis. It had no immoralities. The gross corruptions of some in Pergamum had no parallel there. Sardis is rebuked for none, because its evil was deeper and sadder. It was not flagrantly corrupt, it was only—dead. Of course it had no persecutions. Faithful Smyrna had tribulation unto death, hanging like a thunder-cloud overhead. But Sardis had not life enough to be obnoxious. Why should the world trouble itself about a dead Church? It exactly answers the world's purpose, and is really only a bit of the world under another name.

¶ Preaching at St. George's in the East, London, June 22, 1879, he said: "However it may be with the East-End of London, I am not sure whether the West-End has any reason to plume itself on its superior godliness, whether the dukes and duchesses, the earls and countesses, the squires and knights and their ladies, are much more like what men and women ought to be than the

[1] J. Burns, *Illustrations from Art*, 316.

costermongers and women of the East of London. No doubt at the West-End churches are filled; but, if we ask what fills the West-End churches, it is not certain that we can give a satisfactory answer to the question. I am not sure that they are always filled with people hungering and thirsting after righteousness, or with people who wish to know what the Christian temper and the Christian life are, in order that they may exhibit the one and live the other. It is all very well to attract people by a spectacular service and an eloquent harangue; but I was told the other day of a noted preacher who drew an enormous crowd to hear him under the dome of St. Paul's, and yet, immediately the service was over, the people rushed out asking who had won the Grand Prix de Paris."[1]

4. When a Church is dead, or only half alive, the defect shows itself specifically and certainly in this manner: The Church's work is only half done, and can be but half fulfilled, when only a portion of its members fulfil their allotted task to their Master. If, in a Church which numbers five hundred, only fifty are doing the utmost they can do, the Church's measure of work will not be fulfilled before the judgment-seat of God. Fifty individuals cannot do what it takes five hundred to do. A half-done work, how it is spoiled! The work of a Church that is wearily done, in its life and extent, by a few living men and women in it, is poorly done; they do it with such a struggle; they are so weary and worn out; they have no pleasure, they have no enthusiasm, in doing it. How can they have? One man cannot do another man's work. One link of a chain cannot do duty for another link, and if the one goes, sometimes the chain is worth nothing at all. The work of a dead or half-dead Church stands before God's judgment-seat unfulfilled. Work is indispensable to the enjoyment of a Church's good. No Church can heartily enjoy what we call religious privileges unless it is working hard; and no individual member of that Church will get the good of it unless he is taking a part in the Church's work. He does not need to be an office-bearer or anything of that sort; his work may be just friendliness to others in the house of God, showing a kind spirit to them or taking an interest in them, showing neighbourliness by his Church character.

¶ Christ's Church exists in order to make possible, to make known, to make active, the work which Christ, by His Incarnation,

[1] J. W. Diggle, *Bishop Fraser's Lancashire Life*, 341.

Death, and Resurrection, achieved once for all. It was done, it was finished, the task given Him to do. But only through man could it be laid open to man. He needs men to be His instruments, His organ, by which His own activity, supreme and unique, may find channels of entry—may be solicited, evoked, distributed. In securing men who know His true Name, He is securing a seat, a home, into which He can throw His own spiritual forces. They become, through so believing, the means by which His special and personal powers can liberate and discharge themselves. As He is the Light of the world, so they become, in Him, the eye through which the light illuminates the body: "Ye are the light of the world." As He is the sole purifying Sacrifice, so they become, organized into His Name, the seed of all purification—the salt through which the bulk of men are saved from corrupting: "Ye are the salt of the world." In becoming clean in Him, they become the instruments of further cleansing: "If I have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash the feet of others." In confessing His Name, in becoming stones built into His Temple, they become necessarily the seat and sanctuary whence issue the motives, powers, operations, activities of His authoritative Name.[1]

II.

Life for a Dying Church.

We are justified in concluding that such a condition as that of the Church at Sardis is not final and irreversible. The very fact that this letter came to that community indicates that it was possible to restore and revive. They were not so utterly dead as moribund, as is seen from the fact that in the next verse "ready to die" is the expression applied to some among them, or perhaps to some lingering works which still survived. They were at the point of death, with much of their spiritual life extinct, but here and there was a spark among the ashes, which His eye saw, and His breath could fan into a flame. To the people of a Church sunken in spiritual deadness and torpor, the lamp of faith waning and almost extinguished in their hearts, the Lord presents Himself as having the fulness of all spiritual gifts; able therefore to revive, able to recover, able to bring back from the very gates of spiritual death, those who would employ the little last remaining strength

[1] H. Scott Holland.

which they still retained, in calling, even when thus "in extremis" upon Him.

1. We may assume that the name by which the Lord reveals Himself at the opening of this message, "He that hath the seven Spirits of God," had a special bearing upon the state of the Angel and the Church to whom the message was to be transmitted. The Spirit was thought of, to use the later terminology of the Church, as the "Giver of Life" and of all its sevenfold gifts; the seven Spirits of God were but forms of that Divine life which He—one, yet manifold—imparted. These He, the Lord of the Churches, possessed and could call His own; for thus it is that He can "quicken whom he will": thus He can impart the Divine life, in all its marvellous variety, to those who stand in need of it.

¶ Bengel suggests, and earlier commentators had anticipated the suggestion, that the name of the Angel of the Church in Sardis may have contained some assertion of life; which stood in miserable contradiction with the realities of *death* which the Lord beheld in him; a name therefore which in his case was not the utterance of a truth, but a lie; the name affirming and implying that he was alive, while in truth he was dead; "*Zosimos*" would be such a name in Greek, "*Vitalis*" in Latin. Hengstenberg considers the suggestion not improbable, but it appears exceedingly improbable and far-fetched. The use of "name" as equivalent to fame, reputation, character, is as common in Greek as in English.[1]

2. Christ as the Giver of life is the thought which a dead or decaying Church like that of Sardis needs most. There is a Spirit which gives life, and Christ is the Lord of that Spirit. The whole fulness of the Divine energies is gathered in the Holy Spirit, and this is His chiefest work—to breathe into our deadness the breath of life. Many other blessed offices are His, and many other names belong to Him; but highest of all is the name which expresses His mightiest work, "the Spirit of Life." . . . The "rushing mighty wind" is its best emblem—blowing where it listeth, unsustained, and free, visible only in its effects, and yet heard by every ear that is not deaf, sometimes soft and low, as the respiration of a sleeping child, sometimes loud and strong as the storm.

[1] R. C. Trench.

The very name "the Spirit" emphasizes that aspect of His work in which He is conceived of as the source of life.

There is the antidote for a dead Church, a living Spirit in the sevenfold perfectness of His operations. He is the Spirit of consolation, of adoption, of supplication, of holiness and wisdom, of power, and of love, and of a sound mind; and into all our deadness there will come the life-breath which shall surely quicken it all. Here, and here only, is the hope of a dead Church, and here is the explanation of that which is unique in the history of Christianity as compared with all other religions—its power of self-recuperation, and, when it is apparently nearest extinction, the marvellous, the miraculous, way in which it flames up again because the Spirit of the Lord is poured forth. It brings into prominence not so much the existence and the operations of that Divine Spirit who vitalizes the Church as the continual energy and activity of the ascended Christ in bestowing that Spirit. He has the seven Spirits as He has all other attributes; Himself in His earthly life being filled with its fulness, and it abiding with Him for ever, He has it to impart.

¶ "The Church is not a thing like the Athenæum Club," he cried. "If the Athenæum Club lost all its members, the Athenæum Club would dissolve and cease to exist. But when we belong to the Church we belong to something which is outside all of us: which is outside everything you talk about, outside the Cardinals and the Pope. They belong to it, but it does not belong to them. If we all fell dead suddenly, the Church would still somehow exist in God."[1]

3. One great channel through which spiritual life is imparted to a dying Church is suggested by the picture of our Lord as having "the seven stars." The "stars" are the "angels of the churches," by whom we are probably to understand their bishops and pastors. If so, then we have a striking thought symbolized by the juxtaposition. Christ, as it were, holds in the one hand the empty vessels, and in the other the brimming cup, from which He will pour out the supply for their emptiness. The lesson taught us is, that in a dead Church the teachers mostly partake of the deadness, and are responsible for it. But, further, we learn that Christ's way of reviving a decaying and all but effete Church

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *The Ball and the Cross.*

is oftenest by filling single men full of His Spirit, and then sending them out to kindle a soul under the ribs of death. The Lord of the Churches is able to bring together the gifts of life and the ministry for which those gifts are needed. If those who minister are without the gifts, it is because they have not asked for them. The union of the two attributes is, therefore, one both of encouragement and of warning. If each star shines with its peculiar radiance, it is because it is under the power and influence of the sevenfold Spirit; if it has no life or light, and ceases to shine, there is the danger of its falling away from its place in that glorious band, and becoming as one of the "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

¶ That minister who receives a body of people more or less cast down, and wearied in the great battle of the soul, and sends them forth full of good cheer and enthusiasm, has done his work and deserved well of his people. He has shown himself a true shepherd, and he had not done this service without knowing both the Will of God and the life of man, without draining a wide watershed of experience—from high hills where the soul has been alone with God, and from deep valleys where the soul has tasted the agonies of life—into the stream that shall be the motive power of many lives on the plains beneath.[1]

¶ It will be seen that this beloved minister, who mingled daily with all classes of the community, "radiating happiness" wherever he went; who toiled unceasingly in the dark places where "the poor of the earth hide themselves together"; whose visits were like rays of sunshine to the weary sufferers in city hospitals and elsewhere; who was rejoicing and sorrowing with his people all day long; and whose pulpit ministrations from week to week were an undiminished source of spiritual inspiration, moral uplift and good cheer, was himself not infrequently carrying a secret load of care. Yet we do not remember that he ever once used the expression "it is hard," although his deeply affectionate nature was charged with that quick and ready sympathy for the sufferings of others which must always mean pain to its possessor. The sight of any one enduring physical or mental pain which he could not alleviate unmanned him; but his habitual and unfailing eagerness to point to the bright side of even the darkest experiences was in itself a true consolation. It was as if he stood, a radiant figure, in the midst of us all, calling always, "Be of good cheer, I see land!"[2]

[1] J. Watson, *The Cure of Souls.*

[2] *Hector Mackinnon: A Memoir*, by his Wife (1914), 97.

4. What is the life of a Church? The life of a Church is loving loyalty to Jesus Christ, present more or less in the actual human heart of all the members; an inner, hidden thing, that we cannot weigh in a balance, that we cannot set down in figures in an annual report, that we cannot exhibit to a non-believer or a worldling, but the greatest, the most powerful force in all our world. The life of a Church is the living, real presence of Jesus Christ as a daily influence on the conduct, the thoughts, the words, the deeds of all the members of that Church. The life of a Church is the living presence of Jesus Christ in every committee of management, in every meeting of Sunday-school teachers, in every social gathering of the congregation; a living loyalty and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, born out of a grateful certainty that He died to save us, born out of a grand sympathy with Him, and under the belief that He is willing to save all the men and women and all the little children who are round about us. That is the living life of a Church, and nothing else is. We may have a perfect orthodoxy and death; we may have great activity, and yet we may have death. Nothing is the life of a Church but actual, living loyalty and love to the real, living Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ. A living Church will show its life in such things as hearty singing, earnest prayers, faithful service, generous liberality to every good cause. A living Church will show its life by bravery and courage in taking up new responsibilities that may offer themselves, and working them most heartily. A living Church is living, not because it does one or all of these things, but because it loves loyalty to the Lord Jesus who died for it, and feels that goodness and holiness are the grandest things in the world.

¶ If it turns out that the world is the Church, and the Church is the world, why, the Sinners must just forgive the Saints and the Saints must learn to stand being forgiven.[1]

5. There is a note of wistful urgency in the epistle to the Church of Sardis to remember the past, to keep hold on what remains, and to repent. And there is also an implicit promise; for Christ would never call on men to do either what is impossible or what has not a promise attached to its performance. It is not on

[1] Mary E. Coleridge.

the note of promise, however, but on that of warning, that part of the letter closes. Evidently the thread of hope is slender, and the Church of Sardis is warned that if it does not hearken to this counsel, if it does not exchange its attitude of listless security for one of wakeful watchfulness, its fate will be like that of the city of Sardis. The enemy crept in upon the careless city "like a thief in the night"; and as a thief in the night will Christ return against the careless Church, unlooked for, undesired, not for mercy, but for judgment.

¶ It should not be difficult to realize the effect of the reading of this letter in the hearing of the congregation in Sardis, on some Sunday evening in the second half of the first century. It would strike all as a picture, terrible in its accuracy, of the condition of that Church as seen by God. Surely it would stir the corporate conscience of that Church to a sense of its imminent danger, due to its want of spiritual life, of true brotherly love, of devotion to Christ its Head. It would call out in many, if not in all, the resolve to watch, to watch so as to repel the insidious approaches and attacks of the worldly spirit; to be more faithful in the discharge of the humblest duties imposed upon them by their Master's will. To some it would give a new sense of responsibility, involved in the very fact that the atmosphere around them was cold, hostile. They would feel uplifted by the thought that the honour of their Lord, as well as the safety of their Church, was specially entrusted to their care. It would send them forth into the night, determined to be even more loyal, more faithful, more set on overcoming the world, because they felt that the eye of their Master was upon them, that He was not indifferent to any work they might do, or patience they might show, and that each day's victory over the world and self was the pledge of a final victory, of which only eternity would reveal the joy.[1]

¶ The Rev. Robert Macdonald, then of Blairgowrie, afterwards of North Leith, says in his recollections of McCheyne, "I remember, on one of the earliest visits I paid to London, I was going up to Mr. Nisbet's shop, as he and another gentleman were coming out. Mr. Nisbet said to the other, 'This is a friend of Mr. McCheyne's.' The gentleman at once took hold of me, and said, 'Did you know that remarkable man?' 'Yes,' I said, 'he was an intimate friend of mine.' 'What do you think,' he went on, 'was the secret of that man's holiness?' and, without waiting, he answered his own question: 'Don't you think it was *watchfulness*?' I think he was

[1] C. A. Scott, *The Book of the Revelation*, 124.

right, the more I consider it. Often he was with me at the manse at Blairgowrie, and he always left a benediction behind him. He was always on his guard. My old Adam would have been almost glad to see a slip, I forgot so many things myself. This was his characteristic, *If a man purge himself . . . he shall be a vessel unto honour.*"[1]

[1] A. Smellie, *Robert Murray McCheyne*, 224.

The Waiting Guest.

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The Waiting Guest.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.—Rev. iii. 20.

The Church of Laodicea, to which these words were originally addressed, had grievously declined, so that it scarce retained any sign of spiritual life. Words cannot be found to express more strongly a decayed and almost desperate moral condition than those which Christ addresses to this once flourishing community. Spiritual pride, strange to say, is the most common attendant and fatal sign of spiritual degeneracy, as though, the worse men grew, the better they fancied themselves. But when Christ solemnly rebuked the Church of Laodicea, depicting its condition in terms which lead us to expect nothing else than its final condemnation, then it is that, in place of assuming the office of Judge and thundering forth the vengeance of heaven, Christ still presents Himself as a pleader with the obdurate, and makes one more effort to prevail on them to be saved. This is one of those exquisite transitions which give the Bible such power of persuasiveness.

The text was originally spoken in reference to the unworthy members of a little Church of early believers in Asia Minor, but it passes far beyond the limits of the lukewarm Laodiceans to whom it was addressed. And the "any man" is wide enough to warrant us in stretching out the representation as far as the bounds of humanity extend, and in believing that wherever there is a closed heart there is a knocking Christ.

¶ Of all the pictures which flashed before the mind of the prisoner-seer of Patmos, the most wonderful is that which shows Jesus standing as a suppliant at a door, and that the door of a church (Rev. iii. 20). It was only the other day that I discovered for myself the reason why this is the most wonderful picture in the Apocalypse. Others may have found it out before, but it was only then that I saw that the words in verse 14 should be read as

an inscription over the door—"THE CHURCH OF THE LAODICEANS." I had not thought of that before; the door had been any door to me. And while it was wonderful that Jesus should stand there and knock, His action has all the effect of a surprise when it is seen that He is standing and knocking at the door of the Church of the Laodiceans, of which He had said, "Because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." What was the matter with this Church? It was not a society of unbelievers or hypocrites. It was not accused of unfaithfulness or of heresy, or of any gross or open sin. It was not even a cold Church. Evidently it was not without some faith or love or obedience. Jesus said it was "lukewarm" obedience. What was the cause of this lukewarmness? Our answer is found in the position of Jesus. He is standing at the door—outside. The Church bore His name, and called Him Lord and worshipped Him, but He was not "in the midst" of it. That is enough to account for its spiritual condition. Intensity of devotion is impossible while He remains at the door.[1]

We have represented in the text—

I. The Waiting Christ.
II. The Closed Door.
III. The Door Opened.
IV. The Entrance and the Feast.

I.

THE WAITING CHRIST.

Who knocks? The exalted Christ. What is the door? The closed heart of man. What does He desire? Entrance. What are His knockings and His voice? All providences, all monitions of His Spirit in man's spirit and conscience, the direct invitations of His written or spoken word—in brief, whatsoever sways our hearts to yield to Him and enthrone Him. This is the meaning, in the fewest possible words, of this great text.

1. This wonderful picture of Christ standing at the door like a weary traveller asking to be let in just reverses the common view which one is apt to take of the religious life. We commonly

[1] J. Reid, in *The Churchman*, Feb. 1910, p. 133.

think of truth as hiding itself within its closed door and of ourselves as trying to get into it. We speak of "finding Christ," or "proving God," or "getting religion," as if all these things were mysteries to be explored, hidden behind doors which must be unlocked; as if, in the relation between man and God, man did all the searching, and God was a hidden God. But the fundamental fact of the religious life is this—that the power and love of God are seeking man; that before we love Him, He loves us; that before we know Him, He knows us; that antecedent to our recognition of Him must be our receptivity of Him. Coleridge said that he believed in the Bible because it found him. It is for the same reason that man believes in God. God finds him.

It is coming more and more to be seen that such religious progress as man has made is not so much his endeavour to find God, as God's endeavour to find him; that it is more satisfactory to represent man's religious history as a continuous knocking on the part of God at the door of man's heart than as a continuous spontaneous search on man's part after God. To Christians, indeed, no other view is at all possible; for of course to represent the relation between man and God as search on man's part instead of revelation on God's part would be to empty the idea of God of all meaning.

¶ The sunlight travels far from its source in the deep of heaven—so far that, though it can be expressed in figures, the imagination fails to take in the magnitude of the sum; but when the rays of light have travelled unimpeded so far, and come to the door of my eye, if I shut that door—a thin film of flesh—the light is kept out, and I remain in darkness. Alas! the Light that travelled so far, and came so near—the Light that sought entrance into my heart, and that I kept out—was the Light of life![1]

Behold, I knock! Methinks if on My face
Thou wouldst but rest thine eyes,
Wouldst mark the crown of thorns, the sharp nails trace,
Thou couldst not Me despise!
Thee have I yearned for with a love so strong,
Thee have I sought so earnestly and long;
My road led from a cross unto this place;
Behold, I knock!

[1] W. Arnot, *The Anchor of the Soul*, 278.

2. But we have in the text a hint of the Divine long-suffering, which does not merely knock, and then, if it be not opened to it at once, go away and leave us to ourselves, to our own impenitence and hardness of heart. Christ rather, as one who knows that He has a message which it supremely concerns men that they should receive, and who will therefore take no denial, knocks, and, not being admitted, knocks again, with all the importunity of love. "Behold! I stand at the door and knock." There is in the words a revelation of an infinite long-suffering and patience. The door has long been fastened; we have, like some lazy servant, thought that if we did not answer the knock, the Knocker would go away when He was weary. But we have miscalculated the elasticity and the unfailingness of that patient Christ's love. Rejected, He abides; spurned, He returns.

¶ There is a familiar picture by Holman Hunt that paints the idea of our text. There is shown a cottage neglected, falling into ruin. In front of the window tall thistles spring up, and long grass waves on the pathway, leading to the door overgrown with moss and rank poisonous weeds. In front of the fast-closed door with rusted hinges a tall and stately figure stands amid the night dews and the darkness with a face that tells of toil and long, weary waiting, and one hand uplifted to knock and another bearing a light that may perhaps flash through some of the chinks of the door. It is Christ, the Son of God, seeking to get into our sinful hearts.[1]

3. Christ does not only knock; He also speaks; He makes His "voice" to be heard—a more precious benefit still! It is true, indeed, that we cannot in our interpretation draw any strict line of distinction between Christ knocking and Christ speaking. Both represent His dealings of infinite love with souls for winning them to receive Him; yet at the same time, considering that in this natural world a knock may be anyone's, and on any errand, while the voice accompanying that knock would at once designate who it was that stood without, and with what intention, we have a right, so far as we may venture to distinguish between the two, to see in the voice the more inward appeal, the closer dealing of Christ with the soul, speaking directly by His Spirit to the spirit of the man; in the knocking those more outward gracious dealings, of

[1] W. G. Elmslie, *Memoir and Sermons*, 86.

sorrow and joy, of sickness and health, and the like, which He sends and, sending, uses for the bringing of His elect, in one way or another, by smooth paths or by rough, to Himself. The "voice" very often will interpret and make intelligible the purpose of the "knock."

Will anyone venture to say, "This mysterious voice has never uttered itself to spiritual ear of mine"? Is it indeed so? Have we then never had our times of gracious visitation? Assuredly we all have had them, and not seldom. We may indeed have missed them and their meaning altogether; but the times themselves not the less have been ours—times of a great joy, and times of a great sorrow; times when our God has given to us so much, and times when He has taken away so much; times of weary sickness, and times of unlooked-for recovery; times with no ominous hour for long years knocking at our door with its tidings of mishap; or times when we have had sorrow upon sorrow; times when we have been made to enter on the miserable possession of our past sins; times when we have walked in the glorious liberty of the children of God; times when the world was sweet unto us, and when the world was bitter; times when we walked compassed with troops of friends, and times when lonely paths were appointed for our treading. Has not our God been speaking to us in all this joy and in all this sorrow? He can gently speak as well as loudly knock; and happy is the man who has ears to hear. In every gracious thought that visits us, in every yearning after better things, in every solemn resolution for the days to come, in every tender memory of days gone by, Christ is standing before our door, saying, "It is I."

¶ The boy Samuel, lying sleeping before the light in the inner sanctuary, heard the voice of God, and thought it was only the grey-bearded priest that spoke. We often make the same mistake, and confound the utterances of Christ Himself with the speech of men. Recognize who it is that pleads with you; and do not fancy that when Christ speaks it is Eli that is calling; but say, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth."

¶ It will be as well, I think, to explain these locutions of God, and to describe what the soul feels when it receives them, in order that you may understand the matter; for ever since that time of which I am speaking, when our Lord granted me that grace, it has

been an ordinary occurrence until now, as will appear by what I have yet to say.

The words are very distinctly formed; but by the bodily ear they are not heard. They are, however, much more clearly understood than they would be if they were heard by the ear. It is impossible not to understand them, whatever resistance we may offer. When we wish not to hear anything in this world, we can stop our ears, or give attention to something else: so that, even if we do hear, at least we can refuse to understand. In this locution of God addressed to the soul there is no escape, for in spite of ourselves we must listen; and the understanding must apply itself so thoroughly to the comprehension of that which God wills we should hear that it is nothing to the purpose whether we will it or not; for it is His will, who can do all things. We should understand that His will must be done; and He reveals Himself as our true Lord, having dominion over us. I know this by much experience.[1]

II.

The Closed Door.

1. The "knock" and the "voice" may alike remain unheard and unheeded. It is in the power of every man to close his ear to them; therefore the hypothetical form which this gracious promise takes: "If any man hear my voice, and open the door." There is no irresistible grace here. It is the man himself who must open the door. Christ indeed knocks, claims admittance as to His own; so lifts up His voice that it may be heard, in one sense *must* be heard, by him; but He does not break open the door, or force an entrance by violence. There is a sense in which every man is lord of the house of his own heart; it is his fortress; he must open the gates of it; unless he does so, Christ cannot enter. And, as a necessary complement of this power to open, there belongs also to man the mournful prerogative and privilege of refusing to open; he may keep the door shut, even to the end. He may thus continue to the last blindly at strife with his own blessedness, a miserable conqueror who conquers to his own everlasting loss and defeat. There are times in our lives when we are not at home to the serious thoughts that come to visit us, to the higher life embodied in Christ that would enter in, when we

[1] *The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus* (ed. 1911), 213.

dare to exercise towards God that tremendous power which all of us have, the power not to open the door even to Him, to disregard even His knocking.

¶ I remember hearing some years ago of an incident which occurred near Inverness. A beautiful yacht had been sailing in the Moray Firth. The owners of it—two young men—landed at Inverness, purposing to take a walking tour through the Highlands. But they lost their way, and darkness found them wandering aimlessly about in a very desolate spot. At last, about midnight, they fortunately came upon a little cottage, at the door of which they knocked long and loudly for admittance. But the inmates were all in bed, and curtly the young men were told to go elsewhere, and make no more disturbance there. Luckily, they found shelter in another house some distance away. But next morning the inhospitable people heard a rumour that filled them with chagrin, and gave them a lesson they would not be likely soon to forget. What do you think it was? Just this: that the two young men who knocked in vain at their door the previous night were Prince George (now our King) and his brother the late Duke of Clarence—the most illustrious visitors in the kingdom. You can fancy the shame the people must have felt thus unconsciously to have shown themselves so inhospitable to the noblest persons in all the land. But are we any better? Are we not, indeed, much worse, if we shut Jesus Christ, the greatest of all Kings, out of our hearts?[1]

¶ The late Dr. William Arnot of Edinburgh relates a story that beautifully illustrates this text: "I was visiting," said he, "among my people of Edinburgh. I looked up at the high houses to see whether Betty Gordon, an aged saint of God, was at home. I knew she was in, for when she went away she always carefully pulled down the blind, and this day the blind was not drawn. I knew that she was poor, but she trusted God, and I was glad that somebody had given me some money that morning to give to the poor. I put aside Betty's rent for a month in my pocket and climbed up the winding stone stairs to her door. I knocked softly, but there was no answer. Then I knocked louder, but there was still no answer. At last I said, 'Betty forgot to pull down the blind, and she has gone out. What a pity!' Then I went down the stairs. The next morning I went back and knocked at the door. After a little waiting, Betty came and opened it. 'Oh,' she said, 'is it you, Mr. Arnot? I am so glad to see you! Come in!' There were tears in her eyes and a look

[1] W. Hay, *God's Looking-Glass*, 91.

of care. I said, 'Betty, what are you crying for?' 'Oh,' she said, 'Mr. Arnot, I am so afraid of the landlord. He came yesterday, and I hadna the rent, and I didna open the door, and now I am afraid of him coming; for he is a hard man.' 'Betty,' I asked, 'what time did he come yesterday?' 'He came between eleven and twelve o'clock,' she said. 'It was twenty-five minutes to twelve.' 'Well,' I said, 'it was not the landlord; it was I, and I brought to you this money to pay your rent.' She looked at me, and said, 'Oh, was it you? Did you bring me that money to pay my rent, and I kept the door shut against you, and I wouldna let you in? And I heard you knocking, and I heard you ringing, and I said, That is the landlord; I wish he would go away. And it was my ain meenister. It was my ain Lord who had sent ye as His messenger, and I wouldna let ye in.'"[1]

2. Although it must be for Christ a sad thing—a thing which cuts Him to the heart—that we should trust Him so little as not to care to admit Him, yet it is less for His own sake than for ours that He is vexed. Ours is the loss. He comes with blessings in both hands. This Prince of Love has help and healing for every part of us. It is our unwillingness to open up to Him, and nothing else, that checks the current of His benefactions, and reduces Him to stand, with hands still "laden" and half His kindly purpose unfulfilled, a suppliant Saviour. Yet He will do no more than knock and call. Though the urgency is on His side, He will not open. Though as crowned King He stands, with title to command and power to compel, yet He will not open. God will do no violence to man's reluctance; nor does it beseem One who draws near in grace ungraciously to force a passage. Nor in truth can the door to our heart's affections be broken through from without, only opened consentingly from within. Permission He must crave; He cannot, and He will not, enter undesired. A man is the only being that can open the door of his own heart for Christ to come in. The whole responsibility of accepting or rejecting God's gracious Word, which comes to him all in good faith, lies with the man himself. He knows that at each time when his heart and conscience have been brought in contact with the offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, if he had liked he could have opened the door and welcomed the entrance of the Saviour. And he knows that nobody and nothing kept it fast

[1] J. L. Brandt, *Soul Saving*, 185.

except only himself. "Ye will not come to me," said Christ, "that ye might have life." Men, indeed, do pile up such mountains of rubbish against the door that it cannot be opened, but it was they that put the rubbish there; and they are responsible if the hinges are so rusty that they will not move, or the doorway is clogged that there is no room for it to open.

¶ When Holman Hunt painted that wonderful picture of the thorn-crowned King outside the door knocking, he showed his picture to his dearest friend, in the studio before it was publicly exhibited. His friend looked at it, at the kingly figure of Christ, at the rough and rugged door, and at the clinging tendrils which had spread themselves over the door. Suddenly he said: "Hunt, you have made a terrible mistake here." "What mistake have I made?" said the artist. "Why, you have painted a door without a handle." "That is not a mistake," replied Hunt. "That door has no handle on the outside. It is inside."[1]

But all night long that voice spake urgently,
"Open to Me."
Still harping in mine ears:
"Rise, let Me in."
Pleading with tears:
"Open to Me, that I may come to thee."
While the dew dropped, while the dark hours were cold:
"My Feet bleed, see My Face,
See My Hands bleed that bring thee grace,
My Heart doth bleed for thee,—
Open to Me."

So till the break of day:
Then died away
That voice, in silence as of sorrow;
Then footsteps echoing like a sigh
Passed me by,
Lingering footsteps slow to pass.
On the morrow
I saw upon the grass
Each footprint marked in blood, and on my door
The mark of blood for evermore.[2]

3. It is one of the commonplaces of our experience that we do not like people to force themselves on our acquaintance, to

[1] G. Campbell Morgan. [2] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poetical Works*, 241.

force their friendship on us; and any attempt to do that generally results in creating dislike to those who try to come into our hearts without knocking, who do not respect the privacy of our choice of friends, but walk straight in without announcing themselves or waiting till they are asked to come in. Now it makes the great truth of God's search for us, God's wonderful insistence in meeting us at every point of life, all the more solemn that it is part of the Divine humility, part of God's respect for our freedom, a proof that He wants love and trust that are freely given, that He does not force Himself on our acquaintance, as it were. So we come to this, that to do nothing is to keep our Saviour outside; and that is the way in which most men that miss Him do miss Him. There are many who have sat in the inner chamber, and heard the gracious hand on the outer panel, and have kept their hands folded and their feet still, and done nothing. To do nothing is to do the most dreadful of things, for it is to keep the door shut in the face of Christ. No passionate antagonism is needed, no vehement rejection, no intellectual denial of His truth and His promises. If we want to ruin ourselves, we have simply to do nothing!

¶ Why does Christ not come in? Is not this Divine Spirit omnipotent? Has He not power to enter where He will, to breathe where He chooses, to blow where He listeth? Why, then, does He stand without, knocking at the door of a frail human heart? Could He not break down that door in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and annihilate that opposing barrier which disputes His claim to universal empire? Yes, but in so doing He would annihilate also the man. What makes me a man is just my power to open the door. If I had no power to open or to forbear opening, I would not be responsible. He meant me to respond to Himself, to open on His knocking at the door. He could have no joy in breaking down the door, in taking the kingdom of my heart by violence; there would be no response in that, no answer of a heart, no acceptance of a will by His will. Therefore, He prefers to stand without till I open, to knock till I hear, to speak till I respond.[1]

¶ My friend Mr. Collier, of Manchester, told me of an incident that occurred during one of his mission services at the Central Hall. Holman Hunt's picture was on the screen. In front sat a working man and his little boy. A great hush was over the

[1] G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, 144.

audience. Presently the little boy nudged the man and said, "Dad, why don't they let Him in?" The man was a little nonplussed, then after a moment's silence said, "I don't know, Jimmy. I expect they don't want Him to come in." Again a moment's silence, and Jimmy said, "It's not that. Everybody wants Him." After a pause he continued, "I know why they don't let Him in. They live at the back of the house." The man who refuses to admit Jesus has some motive, something kept behind and out of sight. He is living at the back.[1]

III.

The Door Opened.

1. Notice the simple conditions of the text—"If any man will hear my voice *and open the door.*" Christ does not say: "If any man make himself moral; if any man will try and make himself better; if any man has deep sorrow; if any man has powerful faith." No, that is not it. This is what He says: "If any man will hear my voice, and open the door." The condition of His entrance is simple trust in Him as the Saviour of the soul. That is opening the door, and if we do that, then, just as when we open the shutters, in comes the sunshine; just as when we lift the sluice in flows the crystal stream into the slimy, empty lock, so Christ will enter in.

2. The text is a metaphor, but the declaration, that "if any man open the door" Jesus Christ "will come in to him," is not a metaphor; it is the very heart and centre of the gospel: "I will come in to him," dwell in him, be really incorporated in his being. There is no more certain fact in the whole world than the actual dwelling of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who is in heaven, in the spirits of the people that love Him and trust Him. Into our emptiness He will come with His fulness; into our sinfulness He will come with His righteousness; into our death He will come with His triumphant and immortal life; and He being in us, we shall be full and pure and live for ever, and be blessed with the blessedness of Jesus.

¶ The manner and the way, whereby Christ's righteousness

[1] G. Campbell Morgan.

and obedience, death and sufferings without, become profitable unto us, and are made ours, is by receiving Him, and becoming one with Him in our hearts, embracing and entertaining that Holy Seed which, as it is embraced and entertained, becometh a Holy Birth in us, which in Scripture is called: "Christ formed within"; "Christ within, the hope of glory" (Gal. iv. 19; Col. i. 27), by which the body of sin and death is done away, and we cleansed and washed and purged from our sins, *not imaginarily but really*; and we really and truly made righteous and holy and pure in the sight of God: and it is through the union betwixt Him and us (His righteous life and nature brought forth in us, and we made one with it, as the branches are with the vine), that we have a true title and right to what He hath done and suffered for us.

It is not the works of Christ wrought in us, nor the works which we work in His spirit and power, that we rest and rely upon as the ground and foundation of our justification; but it is Christ Himself, the Worker revealed in us, indwelling in us; His life and spirit covering us, that is the ground of our justification.[1]

IV.

The Entrance and the Feast.

1. "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." These words speak to us in lovely, sympathetic language of a close, familiar, happy communion between Christ and our poor selves, which shall make all life as a feast in company with Him. We remember who is the mouthpiece of Jesus Christ here. It is the disciple who knew most of what quietness of blessedness and serenity of adoring communion there were in leaning on Christ's breast at supper, casting back his head on that loving bosom; looking into those deep, sad eyes, and asking questions which were sure of answer. And St. John, as he wrote down the words, "I will sup with him, and he with me," perhaps remembered that Upper Room where, amidst all the bitter herbs, there was such strange joy and tranquillity. But whether he did or not, may we not take the picture as suggesting to us the possibilities of loving fellowship, of quiet repose, of absolute satisfaction of all desires and needs, which will be ours if we open the door of our hearts by faith and let Jesus Christ come in?

[1] Robert Barclay, *Truth Cleared of Calumnies* (*Works*, i. 164).

¶ Let Thy Holy Spirit be pleased, not only to stand before the door and knock, but also to come in. If I do not open the door, it were too unreasonable to request such a miracle to come in when the doors were shut, as Thou didst to the apostles. Yet let me humbly beg of Thee, that Thou wouldst make the iron gate of my heart open of its own accord. Then let Thy Spirit be pleased to sup in my heart; I have given it an invitation, and I hope I shall give it room. But, O Thou that sendest the guest, send the meat also; and if I be so unmannerly as not to make the Holy Spirit welcome, O let Thy effectual grace make me to make it welcome.[1]

Speechless Sorrow sat with me;
I was sighing wearily,
Lamp and fire were out: the rain
Wildly beat the window-pane.
In the dark we heard a knock,
And a hand was on the lock;
One in waiting spake to me,
Saying sweetly,
"I am come to sup with thee!"

All my room was dark and damp;
"Sorrow," said I, "trim the lamp;
Light the fire, and cheer thy face;
Set the guest-chair in its place."
And again I heard the knock;
In the dark I found the lock:—
"Enter! I have turned the key!
Enter, Stranger!
Who art come to sup with me."

Opening wide the door He came,
But I could not speak His name;
In the guest-chair took His place;
But I could not see His face!
When my cheerful fire was beaming,
When my little lamp was gleaming,
And the feast was spread for three,
Lo! my Master
Was the Guest that supped with me![2]

2. "I will come in to him, and will sup with him" suggests that our Lord not only confers a blessing but receives one; that

[1] Thomas Fuller, *Good Thoughts in Bad Times.* [2] Harriet M. Kimball.

He not only gives us satisfaction in His presence, but gets satisfaction out of our presence. It is one of the most beautiful thoughts presented to us in the Bible, that "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." We often think of what God can do for us. Do we ever think of what we can do for God? We often talk about our trusting God. Have we a holy ambition to be such that it shall be possible for God to trust us? We think of our loving God. Do we ever think of His loving us? We think of God's giving us pleasure. Do we ever think of our giving Him pleasure? And yet our blessed Lord indicates that if the door is opened to Him, and He comes in to a soul that has hitherto excluded Him, He is going to bring a blessing and to get a blessing; He is going to confer good and to receive it; He is going to impart joy, and His own Divine heart is going to get a thrill of joy from the obedience, and the confidence, and the communion of the willing soul.

¶ Oh that we could take that simple view of things, as to feel that the one thing which lies before us is to please God! What gain is it to please the world, to please the great, nay, even to please those whom we love, compared with this? What gain is it to be applauded, admired, courted, followed, compared with this one aim of not being disobedient to a heavenly vision? What can this world offer comparable with that insight into spiritual things, that keen faith, that heavenly peace, that high sanctity, that everlasting righteousness, that hope of glory, which they have who in sincerity love and follow our Lord Jesus Christ?[1]

3. Where Christ is welcomed as guest, He assumes the place of host. "I will sup with him, and *he with me.*" After the Resurrection, when the two disciples, moved to hospitality, implored the unknown Stranger to come in and partake of their humble fare, He yielded to their importunity and, when they were in the guest-chamber, took His place at the head of the table, and blessed the bread and gave it to them. In the beginning of His miracles, He manifested forth His glory in this, that, invited as a common guest to the rustic wedding, He provided the failing wine. And so, wherever a poor man opens his heart and says, "Come in, and I will give Thee my best," Jesus Christ comes in, and gives the man His best, that the man may render it back

[1] J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, viii. 32.

to Him. He accepts the poorest from each, and He gives the richest to each.

With One so condescending and communicative, the blessed soul in whom Jesus dwells ventures to be open too. With happy boldness we begin to tell Him everything. We consult Him even in trifles. We lay great and little cares on Him. We ask His aid in every affair. Thus He shares in all of ours as we in His, and communion attains completion. When such an exchange of sweet and secret actings on one another becomes the habit of the inner life, then these two grow together—the soul and its Saviour—inweaved into each other, till neither can be at any moment satisfied without the other's presence, or is to be thought of as sundered or alone. This action and reaction, this varied play of friendship, this sense of common possession, this familiar commerce of giving and receiving—what else is this but the joy of supping with Him and He with us?

¶ All life to the positive mystic is full of God here and now. Dante found that "In His will is our peace." His dying to self was not a blind negation: it was a living unto God, in whom the personality is strengthened, purified, consecrated and made conjunct with a life larger than, yet kindred to, its own. The "I" and the "Thou" are only lost as they are in love: lost to be enriched, surrendered to be ennobled: the soul comes back, laden with precious fruits, with new activities, with intellect, conscience, will—nay, the whole being sanctified and enlarged.

The mystical books tell of the saint who knocked at the door of Paradise. "Who is there?" asked the Lord. "It is I," answered the saint, but the gate did not open. Again the saint tremblingly drew near and knocked. "Who is there?" said the voice from within. "It is Thou," replied the saint, grown wiser, and immediately the door opened. He had found the Paradise of the soul. And it is in the apprehension of the "Not I" that the "I" passes into a higher state of activity, where it is at once "in tune with the infinite," and passes into a new power of life and service. "We know that we have passed from death into *life*." Because He wills, and we *will* with Him in conscious choice, is the secret of positive mysticism.[1]

4. The promise of the text is fulfilled immediately when the door of the heart is opened, but it shadows and prophesies a

[1] D. Butler, *George Fox in Scotland*, 108.

nobler fulfilment in the heavens. Here and now Christ and we may sit together, but the feast will be like the Passover, eaten with loins girt and staff in hand, the Red Sea and the wilderness waiting to be trodden. But there comes a more perfect form of the communion, when Christ at the last will bring His servants to His table in His Kingdom, and there their works shall follow them; and He and they shall sit together for ever, and for ever "rejoice in the fatness of thy house, even of thy holy temple."

¶ Come in, Thou Saviour-King, who art knocking at our very souls this day for leave to show us all Thy love, come in and traverse these unclean chambers of our being! Purge them by Thy blood. Enlighten their darkness. Fill their empty spaces with Thy riches. Make what is ours, Thine. See, we give it unto Thee—infirmity, error, sorrow: bear it with us! Make what is Thine, ours. See, we open ourselves wide for it—pardon, strength, gladness: share Thy blessings with us! So shall we sup with Thee and Thou with us; till in this communion our spirits echo after their poor measure that ever-sounding song which circles round Thy heavenly banquet-hall—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!"[1]

I love Thee, Lord, for Thou didst first love me,
And didst a home in this poor mansion seek.
I heard Thy knock, and straight unbarred my heart,
And listened wondering to Thine accents meek.

I long had lived unknowing of Thy love,
And selfishness directed all my will;
The name of God was but a name to me,
And earthly thoughts and aims enthralled me still.

Briers and thorns obstructed all approach,
And tangled weeds lay rotting at the door;
But Thou didst come, with bleeding hands and feet,
And ask admittance to my sin-stained floor.

I saw Thy love, I heard Thy pleading voice;
Thy words of grace enkindled high desire;
And, led by Thee, my Father I adored,
And on me fell the Holy Spirit's fire.

[1] J. O. Dykes.

I love Thee, Lord, but oh! how cold my love:
Abide Thou still within my trembling heart;
Lay Thou on me the purifying cross,
And let Thy life within my life have part.[1]

[1] J. Drummond, *Johannine Thoughts*, 30.

An Opened Book and a New Song.

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An Opened Book and a New Song.

They sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.—Rev. v. 9.

1. The previous chapter of Revelation shows us how creation reveals God's glory. But what of His love, and His eternal purpose for man? Were there nothing beyond the revelation of God in nature, we could speak of these only with hesitating lips and stammering utterance. Hence, to the vision of the four living creatures, with their ceaseless song of praise for the blessings of *creation*, there succeeds another vision, which discloses how the revelation of God's eternal purpose of love is manifested in the Incarnation, and which thus leads up to the adoration of the Lamb and the hymn of thanksgiving for the blessings of *redemption*. Once more the Seer looks, and sees in the right hand of the Almighty seated on the throne "a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals." This book wherein are written "the things which are to be hereafter" is best interpreted of the expression of God's purpose and will. It is "close sealed," because apart from Christ, God's purpose is inscrutable.

2. On the unsealing of this book and the revelation of its contents depends the possibility of counselling and encouraging in advance the trembling Churches of Christ; and the heart of the Seer is heavy as he realizes that even in heaven no one can be found who is worthy to open the book. To the cynic, life may be a comedy that provokes to laughter; but to all thoughtful and serious men, if there be no Divinely given explanation of its purpose, it is a tragedy that moves to tears. No wonder, then, that St. John weeps much as he stands before the sealed book, unable to read it himself or to find one to open it and interpret its contents to him. His tears, however, are stopped, for the

voice of an angel proclaims: "The Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome, to open the book and the seven seals thereof." The mystery is not destined to remain insoluble. There is One who can unravel it.

3. When the promised figure of the One who is worthy appears, He is seen under the figure of a Lamb, a Lamb "as though it had been slain"—slain in sacrifice, as the word suggests. The lion is the symbol of all that is strong and kingly and majestic, the very type of power and might; the lamb is the symbol of all that is meek and gentle and lowly. Its associations are with suffering and death; it is the animal fittest for sacrifice. The vision thus teaches us that only in Christ and through the Incarnation and Passion are God's love and purpose disclosed. None but Christ can "open the book." And it is a thought that is full of significance for us that, even when heavenly voices were proclaiming the victory of the Son of God, the saint could see nothing that looked like strength and power and kingship, but only that which was weak and suffering, and bore the marks of sacrifice and death—"a Lamb as it had been slain."

4. When the Lamb "takes the book," when it is seen that there is One capable of revealing God's purpose and of disclosing His will, at once there is a burst of praise from all created life. All Heaven fell down and worshipped the Lamb with a "new song," the Hymn of Redemption, a redemption purchased unto God by the sacrifice of His life; the purchase being "men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation." This new song breaks first from the lips of the heavenly host, from the four living creatures, and the four-and-twenty "elders"; but it is caught up by voices which have not been heard as yet. Created things not only in heaven but also on earth add their harmonies to swell the song. For now, through the salvation which has been wrought by the Lamb, a place has been made for them along with the unfallen angels, the beings unstained by sin; the theme of their rejoicing worship is not the redemption only, but to that they add the creation too, which in the preceding chapter had been hymned by the angels alone. The worship which these had offered "to him that sitteth upon the throne," and the worship which is

offered by earth and heaven to the Lamb, now flow together in one stream. All God's creatures join to sing the double hymn of creation and redemption, wherein the glory of God is complete.

¶ The meaning of the passage has been obscured by the adoption in the received text of the Authorized Version of an inferior reading which makes the angels sing, "Thou hast redeemed us to God." It is to this incorrect reading that we owe the luckless misconception by which the kingly angels have been transformed into representatives of humanity. But these beings were regarded by the Seer as superhuman and, consequently, were not objects of Divine redemption. The Revised Version has followed the better reading and translates, "Thou didst purchase unto God men of every tribe," making the necessary changes throughout the hymn.

¶ It is possible to estimate the greatness of a man's thought by the effect it produces on other master minds. This test can be applied to the Seer's vision of the worship of the Lamb, with the utmost confidence in the result. This chapter of the Revelation fired such enthusiasm in the soul of Hubert van Eyck that he produced the masterpiece which called the Flemish school of painting into existence. But it is not necessary to travel to Ghent to view the Adoration of the Lamb in order to realize the force of the inspiration which is inherent in these visions. The massive choruses at the close of Handel's "Messiah" represent the highest flight of human genius in the endeavour to suggest the mighty volume of praise which the Seer has built up on the great pedal note of Redemption.[1]

I.

The New Song.

"They sing" are the opening words of the text. Who are "they"? If we look back at the preceding verse, we shall see that those who swelled the chorus of the new song are divisible into two companies, two types of life. There are, first, "the living creatures," the representatives of nature animate and inanimate, now "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." Then there is redeemed manhood. These united together to swell the new song,

[1] R. W. Pounder, *Historical Notes on the Book of Revelation*, 173.

which extolled the accomplishment of human redemption. As such it was the continuation and final close of the hymn to the incarnate and suffering Redeemer which had ruled the psalmody of heaven and earth from the Fall. When it began in heaven we know not; but we hear it throughout the Scriptures which testify of His coming. It is the melody which the Bible makes everywhere in its heart to the Lord. It first proclaimed from age to age a coming Deliverer; that song became old, and a new one extolled His Advent; and now the hymn of the Incarnation, which indeed can never become old, receives its perfection when it glorifies the attainment of the great end of the Incarnation—the redemption of the human race. That song began in heaven; for only a few upon earth knew the mystery of the Passion, and none knew it in all its meaning, when the Redeemer left the earth. Nor can we extol the finished work of the eternal wisdom and justice and mercy with the same insight into its glory as is vouchsafed above. The song of creation can be magnified worthily only in heaven. Much more is the song of redemption reserved for that higher scene. There only can it be set to fitting music; and hence the new song, "Thou wast slain and didst purchase with thy blood" remains the standard and text of our feebler echoes upon earth.

¶ We know not upon how many points Redemption touches; what unseen worlds, what unborn generations, what undeveloped forms of being it embraces. We know not to what Warfare, to what Accomplishment our Lord referred when He spoke those words, "It is finished." We know not, in short, as Butler says, what in the works and counsels of God are ends, and what means to a further end, or how what appears to us as final may be initial with Him. But we see enough around us, and within us, to show that it was necessary that Christ should suffer many things, and after that enter into His glory. Enough to learn that we shall find no higher thing above, shall pierce to no deeper thing below, than the Cross and its solemn and tender teachings. If we would climb up into heaven, it is there; if we would go down into hell, it is there also. He alone among men who has clasped this great mystery of grief and love to his bosom sees, if it be as yet but through a glass darkly, how pain and love, yes, joy also, *all things that have a living root in humanity*, come to bloom under its shadow; how love that cannot die and faith that grows to certainty, and hope that maketh not ashamed, root themselves

about it, with all fair things that wither in life, and noble things for which it has no room.[1]

1. It was a new song—new, because its topics were new; for what so new and strange as God incarnate shedding His blood upon the cross, and by virtue of that offering redeeming the lost kindreds and nations of the earth?—new, because it is the song of the new creation, the song of those to whom "all things are become new"—new hearts, new lips, new hopes, new graces. And so it is new, and shall be new for ever; no newness to grow old some day; no name of newness to become an anachronism when a few years or a few generations are gone by; but new with an eternal newness, like the everlasting strength and undecaying youth of the Most High. All is new; new to the ancient worshippers of heaven, new to the redeemed who now first join them, new to the saints who daily and hourly enter within the veil, new to the Seer who wrote the word, and new to us who hear it.

¶ It is related of Peter Mackenzie, the Durham miner, who became the noted Wesleyan preacher and lecturer, that when he first started out on his career as an evangelist his purpose was to get a crowd of people together for others to preach to. He would gather the crowd himself, and then get somebody to speak to them. But one day he had a large crowd but no speaker, so they forced him into speaking. He said, "If I must preach, give me my subject," and they said, "Preach about heaven." "Very well," said Peter Mackenzie, and thereupon launched out in a characteristic description of heaven. Right in the middle of his sermon some one shouted out, "Peter, what do they do in heaven?" He paused for a moment, and then said: "One thing they do is to sing. I expect one day to walk along the streets of the eternal city, and come face to face with David playing an accompaniment on his harp to his own great song, 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.' I expect some day I shall lead the choir in heaven, and if ever I do, there are two songs I am going to give out. One is No. 749 in the Wesleyan Hymn-book, 'My God and Father, while I stray'; but if I ever give out that song in heaven, half the angels in the choir will say, 'Peter, you are in heaven, and you cannot stray.' Then if I give that out, and they cannot sing it, I will try another, No. 651, in the Wesleyan Hymn-book, 'Though waves and storms beat o'er my head'; and then, not half

[1] Dora Greenwell, *The Patience of Hope* (ed. 1894), 33.

the angels, but the whole choir will be on their feet, saying, 'Peter Mackenzie, this is heaven; there are no storms here.' Then I think I shall stand in wonder and amazement, and say, 'What shall we sing?' and from every angel in the skies will come the answer, 'Sing the New Song!' 'Sing the New Song!' Then all the redeemed in heaven, from the least unto the greatest, will join in singing an ascription of praise unto Him who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own precious blood."[1]

2. The new song is sung both by saints on earth and by saints in heaven. It is the song with which the whole company of the redeemed shall enter into the joy of their Lord, sung by the saved as they pass into their full consummation of body and soul. When the judgment is past and the final glory of heaven is attained, we shall all together sing. Those worshippers without us will not be made perfect. That final hymn ear hath not yet heard, nor hath it yet entered into the heart of man, whether in heaven or on earth, to conceive. It cannot be sung till all the singers are made ready; nor shall it be heard but in the New Jerusalem, where He that sitteth upon the throne shall for the last time say, "Behold, I make all things new." St. John gives us one brief glimpse, but what we then behold is only the beginning; the spirits of the just made perfect were already there in countless multitudes, as we are told, and their number has been swelling onward from that day to this, filling fast the many mansions of our Father's house. Singers of this song are constantly passing from the outer courts, where they rehearse it, into the Holiest. Each moment adds a new voice to the harmony of heaven, and not one added voice does the Redeemer's ear fail to distinguish. The ransomed of the Lord are returning to Zion, not merely one by one, but in ever-increasing tribes, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. This door of hope in our valley of Achor gives us a glance that should comfort our life by showing what death is: that it is to the prepared only a passage for his soul, with the same uninterrupted song, scarcely faltering in death, into the presence of Christ and the saints who wait for him.

¶ Dr. Magee, then Bishop of Peterborough, was one of the speakers at a discussion on Pessimism that took place at the

[1] J. Wilbur Chapman, *Bells of Gold*, 36.

Manchester Church Congress of 1888. Christianity, he maintained, was at once both the most pessimistic and most optimistic of all the philosophies of life. "You, the pessimist," he said, "tell me of the sorrow, the suffering, the misery of humanity; and I tell of the time when death shall be destroyed, and when sorrow and sighing will be done away with, and when men will weep no more. You tell me here of mystery and difficulty and perplexity; and I tell you of the time when we shall know even as we are known, and doubt and mystery, like sin and sorrow and shame, shall fade away in the white light around the throne on which sits the Lamb that died for mankind. There, in the future, lies the completed optimism of Christianity. Here, in the Christian life, though working feebly and imperfectly as it does, is to be seen the evidence of the truth of Christianity that we may take home to our hearts. Let us strengthen this evidence, each one of us, in our daily Christian life, and meanwhile we can patiently await the time when the day of full unclouded vision shall dawn, and the shadows of our fears and doubts shall flee away for ever."[1]

3. We must be encouraged to learn this new song for ourselves. St. John came down from his Patmos elevation, as he came down from Mount Tabor, but not to forget what he had seen and heard. He was still in the Spirit, though he no longer heard these unutterable things; and we know by the opening doxology of this book what strain it was that lingered in his ears. We also are learning the same song. It is our blessed privilege to sing, in these our probationary days of sorrow, and conflict, and salvation not yet finally secure, the song of confident assurance: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood be glory and dominion for ever." Redemption from our guilt through faith in the atonement; salvation from our defilement through the washing of His Spirit purchased by His blood; the priestly consecration of dominion over our own souls in the strength of union with Himself—these are the three-one blessings which we may rejoice in by an assured experience in this lower world. If we are taught that song by the Spirit here, and hold fast our confidence unto death, we shall one day sing it new in our Saviour's Kingdom.

¶ A minister was calling upon a dying man, who would not accept Jesus. He said God was merciful, and he would trust

[1] J. C. Macdonnell, *Life of Archbishop Magee*, ii. 254.

God. "Well," said the minister, "what will you do when you get to heaven?" He said, "I shall do what everybody else does." "Well, what do they do?" asked the minister. "They sing," he said. "Will you sing?" said the minister. "Yes," he said, "I shall sing." Then the minister quoted Rev. xiv. 3: "And no man could sing that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, they which were redeemed from the earth." But he had misquoted it. It is not that way; it is thus it should read: "And no man could *learn* that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, they which were redeemed from the earth." You have got to learn it here to be able to sing it yonder. You have got to strike the note to-day to be able to sing it to-morrow. You have got to get into tune now, or be out of tune yonder.[1]

4. One peculiarity of the "new song" lies in those who sing it. For the first time in history it is a united voice—a voice out of "every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation." It is not that there has ceased to be a separate tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. It is from out the diversities that the song is heard. It is not the voice of a brotherhood which has been purchased by the elimination of distinctions; it is a harmony pulsating through these. It is a declaration of the fact that humanity is deeper than all its varieties. It is a protest against the belief that any difference of environment can ever counterbalance the points of agreement between man and man. It is emphatically a new song —quite foreign to the spirit of paganism, not native even to the spirit of Judaism. It is the emergence into the world of a fresh thought—the idea of an equal human nature lying below the accidents of time and space—the brotherhood of soul with soul.

¶ It is a delight to a soldier or traveller to look back on his escapes when they are over; and for a saint in heaven to look back on his sins and sorrows upon earth, his fears and tears, his enemies and dangers, his wants and calamities, must make his joy more joyful. Therefore the blessed, in praising the Lamb, mention His redeeming them out of every nation and kindred and tongue; and so, out of their misery and wants and sins, and making them kings and priests unto God. But if they had nothing but content and rest on earth, what room would there have been for these rejoicings hereafter?[2]

[1] J. Wilbur Chapman, *Bells of Gold*, 33.

[2] Richard Baxter.

5. Four terms ("tribe," "tongue," "people," "nation") are employed, as if to give emphasis to the universality of redemption, for four is the number of extension in all directions. The suggestion is that the redemption of Christ is world-wide. There is nothing local in it. There is no restriction in its intention, and there is no restriction in its application. It is co-extensive with the earth in its design; it is co-extensive with human nature in its efficacy. There is no disposition, no conformation, no peculiarity of temper or understanding, of state or of heart, which "the purchasing blood" cannot reach and meet. And it will be seen that it has reached, that it has met all. It will be seen that, where it has failed to save, it has not been because it was inappropriate, but only because it was unappropriated; because men would not use it, not because it was even for them useless.

¶ Kindred, tongue, people, nation, will not, it appears, be obliterated from the Communion of Saints. Since in that blessed company similarities and varieties will alike become bonds of affection, motives of sympathy, we see as in a glass what they should even now already be to us who are militant here on earth. For earth holds heaven in the bud; our perfection there has to be developed out of our imperfection here.

By grace love of kindred learns to embrace the whole human family. By grace nations become bound and welded together in the unifying Presence of God (see Zech. viii. 20–23). By grace; but not by nature. Now even kindred often lack warmth, tongues make discord, peoples encroach on one another, nations learn and practise war.—Lord, forgive and help us.

A lesson against antipathies. Every kindred, every tongue, every people, every nation, promises to be represented there and associate there: French with Germans, Italians with Austrians, English with Irish, whites with blacks, all ranks with all ranks, all men with all men,—an alarum against antipathies![1]

> They are flocking from the East
> And the West,
> They are flocking from the North
> And the South,
> Every moment setting forth
> From realm of snake or lion,
> Swamp or sand,
> Ice or burning.
>
> Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 185.

Greatest and least,
Palm in hand
And praise in mouth,
They are flocking up the path
To their rest,
Up the path that hath
No turning.
Up the steeps of Zion
They are mounting,
Coming, coming,
Throngs beyond man's counting;

They are thronging
From the East and West,
From the North and South;
Saints are thronging, loving, longing,
To their land
Of rest,
Palm in hand
And praise in mouth.[1]

II.

The Opened Book.

1. The "new song" vindicates for Jesus Christ the unique place which He has taken in the history of the world. By a supreme act of self-sacrifice He has purchased men of all races and nationalities for the service of God, founded a vast spiritual Empire, and converted human life into a priestly service and a royal dignity. He who has done this is worthy to have committed into His hands the keeping of the book of destiny, to break its seals and unroll its closely packed lengths.

In the opinion of the author of the Apocalypse, life with its problems is a sealed book. That is absolutely in accordance with universal human experience. We are asking to-day the same questions as men asked in the earliest days of which we have any record. Look at that old stone Sphinx lying upon the sands of Egypt, relic of those dim, unmeasured stretches of time prior to the Bible. What is it but an effort to express the insoluble

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poetical Works*, 256.

riddle of the world; to set forth the complex consciousness of a mystery, which has seemed at times terrible as a lion, at others fascinating and inconsistent as a woman? The elusive smile that still lingers on its face has done successful battle with the sandstorms of long ages; and, in answer to the perennial questions, What? Whence? Whither? seems mockingly to say, "Nothing is known, nothing."

¶ We reached Cairo on Christmas Eve [1886], and during the week we saw something of old Cairo under the guidance of friends. Through the kindness of the Sirdar we were able to stay a few days at the deserted villa just under the Pyramids, built many years before by the Khedive for the use of the Empress Eugenie. The Sphinx had at once enthralled Signor; he therefore greatly wished to stay near it, and so be able to see it under various conditions of light. New Year's Day found him, in its early hours and late, studying this riddle of the ages; "itself a symbol of time," he said, "strong and calm, inexorable, with a smile that is cruel. No words can have described, or I think ever can describe, the Sphinx. It is not beautiful in the ordinary sense, yet it has some elements of unexampled beauty. It exercises an extraordinary fascination. The line of the cheek, as seen against the sky, is surprisingly beautiful—a sweep of twenty feet, and the expression of the face, battered out of shape as it is, has still something indescribably impressive." He knew he had undertaken much when he set himself to paint the portrait of the Sphinx; he tried for the massiveness and the weight of this rock-hewn giant, with yet a certain delicacy, and even tenderness, both from the quality of line and from the crumbling surface of the sandstone, at the same time wishing to express what he perceived in it—an epitome of all Egyptian art, its solemnity, mystery—infinity![1]

2. "I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book . . . close sealed." There is a great and majestic Personality seated upon the throne of all things, in whose right hand is a book which contains the answers to all our serious problems. There may be "clouds and darkness" round about Him, but "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Though the mysteries of birth and death, of whence and whither, of pain and sin, cannot be solved by human reason, there is One who knows. Books do not write themselves; in the right hand of Him that sitteth on the throne there is "a book . . . close

[1] M. S. Watts, *George Frederic Watts*, ii. 65.

sealed." "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is *worthy* to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" It is moral worth that is the looked-for qualification. The angel asks the right question, not "Who knows how to open the book?" but "Who is worthy?" The problems of life are not intellectual puzzles, but paths of duty. Genius will not solve them; their secret may be unfolded in the consciousness of a child. Moral worth will open the book. "No one knoweth . . . the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." "And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon." No one who has tried to untie the knots of the seven seals with reason has been able to give a satisfactory answer.

The Redeemer takes the book; all the problems of life are answered in redemption. "Worthy art thou to take the book." Why is that? Because human nature is identical in all ages; we are made for God, and unhappy till we find Him; one step out of self is a step into God; "he that abideth in love, abideth in God"; Christ lifts us out of self. We hear the echoes of St. Paul's cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? . . . I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The Redeemer solves the great problem of life: How can we be delivered from the imperious dominion, the exacting tyranny, of self? By a greater spell He dissipates the Circean enchantments. He ransoms us from the bondage of self by laying down His life, from the flesh-pots of Egypt we loathe and yet love, curse and yet accept, by suffering for us upon the tree. He comes asking nothing but a cross whereon to die. The only life of pure, unselfish, devoted, cleansing, elevating love the world has ever seen is willingly yielded to be broken on the wheel of man's insensate hate, for the life of the world. He was slain, not for Himself, for He was perfect; but for us, for we are sinful.

¶ Victor Hugo was one of the few novelists who have understood the Atonement. In "Les Misérables" he puts the truth in that oft-told story of the escaping convict, Jean Valjean, hospitably entertained by the good old curé, and robbing him of his silver candlesticks. When the *gens d'armes* caught and brought him back with the booty in his possession, the curé said, "Why

should he not take them, they are his?" Then, when the astonished officers of the law had retired, "Jean Valjean, I have bought you from yourself; go and be a better man." So Christ's forgiveness buys us from ourselves, lifts us into a higher life.[1]

3. The Lamb of God, who was slain on Calvary, alone has the power to disclose and to interpret the mind and purpose and ways of God. Christ breaks the seals and gives us to read pages which otherwise had been dark to men. We cannot read the Old Testament except in Christ's light. Only by an effort of the imagination can we realize how closely sealed and how dark with mystery the Old Testament would have been if Christ had not died and risen again. The truth is as clearly illustrated by the New Testament Scriptures. There are some to-day to whom the New Testament is still a sealed book. Read the Gospels and the Epistles in the light of that death for sin, and every word and deed is translated. The cradle of Bethlehem, the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, the Jordan water at baptism, the wilderness of temptation, the garden of Gethsemane, and all the riches of grace in sermon and parable and miracle, stand out as the life-story that leads to the cross. It is the Lamb who was slain that unfolds, interprets, and expounds the New Testament.

¶ Thomas à Kempis ever preaches the *Cross* as life's great secret and underlying fact. Christ is to him the perfect example of self-abandonment and oneness with God, and His Cross is the universal Cross. His victory is the triumph of all disciples who live in Him. While the mystic generally thinks solely or mainly of the Incarnation, Thomas à Kempis never forgets the Cross, and thereby at once he safeguards personality as well as preserves his religion from ecstatic excesses. Dying to self and living to God—renouncing self and regaining self in the holy Jesus' love, are the keynotes of his message. The following of Jesus is to him cross-bearing, as the road to inner consolation and peace. "Why fearest thou to take up the Cross which leadeth thee to a kingdom? In the Cross is salvation, in the Cross is life, in the Cross is protection against our enemies, in the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the Cross is strength of mind, in the Cross joy of spirit, in the Cross the height of virtue, in the Cross the perfection of sanctity. There is no salvation of the soul, nor hope of everlasting life, but in the Cross."[2]

[1] H. H. Snell.

[2] D. Butler, *Thomas à Kempis*, 133.

4. Men who come to Christ always find the key to destiny in His hands. He has opened the book, and for them no longer fate but Jesus Christ is lord and master of their lives. It is not only the Lamb, but the Lamb slain that we see; not only love but sacrifice. The Lamb has death-wounds on its body, as it stands in the first pathos of death, slain though not yet fallen. This is indeed the kind of love that conquers destiny. There are many kinds of love—placidly selfish love, good-humoured and easy-going affection, that knows nothing of sacrifice. But this is by far too great a task for such love. The book of destiny remains for ever closed to selfishness. So we come in sight of the ancient truth, old indeed as the world though but slowly apprehended, that man must sacrifice to destiny. To gain either the understanding or the mastery of fate we must give up ourselves. It is a hard lesson, but it is the way in which the world is made, and we must all learn it. It is sacrifice, and sacrifice alone, that avails in the last resort to give either peace or victory.

Many a song of praise had previously been sung on earth and in heaven to the glory of the self-existent and eternal God. Many a psalm had also been chanted in honour of the coming Messiah ere He made His advent in our world. When He had completed His work of redeeming love on earth, He ascended into heaven amid the acclamations and songs of thousands of angels. But now the redeemed around the throne behold their Lord, whom they remember as the Lamb slain, the Victim which suffered for their sins, taking up and carrying on the design of God in the administration of His Kingdom, so that He may make all things redound to His Father's glory and to the completion of human redemption. Then they burst forth in this new song.

The song sung by this great multitude, including even the representatives of nature, now "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God," is a new song, for it is the song of the "new creation"; and its burden, it will be observed, is not creation, but redemption by the blood of the Lamb, a redemption through which all partaking of it are raised to a higher glory and a fairer beauty than that enjoyed and exhibited before sin had as yet entered into the world, and when God saw that all that He had made was good.

As we see Christ moving on towards Calvary, we tremble as

we realize how the fate of the world turned on that cross. By accepting it, He revealed the meaning of man's destiny, and He conquered it for man. The Lamb slain prevailed to open the book. The revealing power of the cross has showed how through suffering man is made perfect, and changed the mystery of pain to the hope of glory, the bitter cry to the shout of victory, and the victims of life to the sons of God.

¶ "Thou didst purchase us unto God with Thy blood." The slave of past guilt, of besetting sin, of frailty and futility, of dark despair, Jesus ransomed me. And not by a mere act of sovereignty and might. No, but by breaking the alabaster vase of His unblemished body for me, and by pouring forth the costly spikenard of His blood. Can I ever forget it? will it not be the theme of my praise through the unending years of the future?[1]

¶ Others have been compelled to acknowledge mysteries of reason which prepare for and harmonize with the mysteries ascribed to religion by the Christian Church; they have felt that the Incarnation and Passion are not incredible to those who believe and meditate on the earlier mystery of creation; that the difficulties which beset the one are the same in kind as the mysteries which beset the other; that in the region of philosophical thought an acting is a suffering God, and that whatever inclines a commencing inquirer to reject as absurd a belief in a "Lamb slain before the foundation of the world," the same principle if pursued into its philosophical consequences would lead to rejecting the belief of any personal God at all.[2]

O Lamb of God, our Light, of fleece how luminous!
If speech would come, as water-lilies rise
From the deep founts and offer sacrifice,
Then might I hope
In majesty of many a trope
To open unto man the glorious Sign
How Thou the Lamb even as a lamp dost shine.

White must Thou be that we may recognize
Thou art the Host, and there must be
In Thy appearing marks of Calvary:
But deep in thought, untainted by event.
Even as from Thy Father's Bosom sent,
Thou must be manifest. The great "I am"
Shines through prevailing fleeces, Abel's Lamb.[3]

[1] A. Smellie, *In the Hour of Silence*, 97.
[2] *Life of Sir William Rowan Hamilton*, 465.
[3] Michael Field, *Mystic Trees*, 131.

The Redeemed.

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THE REDEEMED.

After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.—Rev. vii. 9, 10.

1. THE Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia end with the third chapter of the Apocalypse. The fourth and fifth chapters describe two great acts of worship. In the fourth chapter God is worshipped as the Creator. The four Cherubim, or Living Creatures, representing all created life, are seen in perpetual adoration of their Maker. The four-and-twenty Elders—the patriarchs of the Old Covenant and the apostles of the New—fall down before the throne and worship God, saying, "Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for thou didst create all things."

The fifth chapter introduces the great work of redemption. The Lamb appears in the midst of the throne, typical of the eternal Son, the Redeemer of the world. As He takes the Book of Doom from His Father's hands, the four Living Creatures and the four-and-twenty Elders fall down before Him and sing a new song, the song of the redeemed. The angel chorus pours forth its chant of thanksgiving to the Lamb, and every creature in heaven and earth and sea joins in the act of adoration.

Then at the ninth verse of the seventh chapter this second great act of worship enters on a new stage. The congregation, which hitherto has been drawn from the twelve tribes of Israel, is now seen to be a great multitude which no man can number, and it is taken from every nation upon the earth.

2. The redeemed are at worship. Where are they? They are in heaven, no doubt. But heaven is not to be identified with the world to come. Life before the throne of God, says Swete, is life

wherever spent, if it is dominated by a joyful consciousness of the Divine Presence and Glory. And he adds that the present picture must be correlated with that of chapters xxi. and xxii.

The text suggests, first, the number of the redeemed; second, their variety; and third, their unity—their unity being seen (1) in their position or standing; (2) in their character; (3) in their feeling; and (4) in their occupation.

I.

The Number of the Redeemed.

1. "A great multitude, which no man could number." It is a vision. But St. John had some material to work upon. Says Harnack, "The vigour and the variety of the forms already assumed by Christianity in these quarters are shown by the seven epistles to the Churches in the Johannine Apocalypse, by the whole tenor of the book, and by the Ignatian Writings."

¶ Tacitus, the careful Roman historian, in writing of the persecution of the Christians, under Nero in 64 A.D., says of their number that they were a huge multitude—"ingens multitudo." The expansion of Christianity in the first years of its existence is one of the marvels of history. When it first began to be preached it was ridiculed and lampooned by the ablest satirists of the day. Every foul crime was charged upon its followers. The believers in the Christ were tortured, mutilated, thrown to wild beasts. Yet in spite of everything the church grew, grew and increased rapidly in numbers and in power.

Seventy years after the founding of the very first Gentile church in Syrian Antioch, Pliny wrote in the strongest terms about the spread of Christianity throughout remote Bithynia, a spread which in his view already threatened other cults throughout the province. Seventy years later still the Paschal controversy reveals the existence of a Christian federation of churches, stretching from Lyons to Edessa, with its headquarters situated at Rome. Seventy years later again, the Emperor Decius—the fierce persecutor—declared he would sooner have a rival emperor in Rome than a Christian bishop. And ere another seventy years had passed, the cross was sewn upon the Roman colours.[1]

[1] H. T. Sell, *Studies in Early Church History*, 150.

2. But the vastness is the outcome of faith much more than of sight. In another place St. John states the impression which the physical eye receives: "We are of God, and *the whole world lieth in wickedness.*" The eye of faith is the eye of that God who invited Abraham to go out into the evening and count the number of the stars. It is the eye of that Christ of God who planted the mustard seed which grew into a great tree.

¶ As their praise was erst not of men but of God, so now their number is known not to men but to God. "So many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable." "I beheld," says St. John: and you with your eyes, I with mine (please God!) shall yet behold.[1]

3. The text is an answer at last to the question, "Are there few that be saved?" Were we to answer that question by sight we should probably answer it quite otherwise, our judgment being formed partly from the state of our own heart, and partly from what we see around us. With our own heart we cannot be too stern. To it Christ's answer is addressed, "Strive ye to enter in." With our neighbour we cannot perhaps be too lenient. In any case our neighbour has a right to ask, "Who made thee a judge or a divider over us?" We do not know enough to form a judgment.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
  Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord, its various tone,
  Each spring, its various bias.
Then at the balance let's be mute,
  We never can adjust it;
What's done we partly may compute,
  But know not what's resisted.[2]

¶ It is recorded of Daniel Webster that he was travelling in a then uninhabited part of Western America which is now covered by great and populous cities. As he and a friend were exploring that vast solitude, Webster suddenly lowered his head and seemed to listen.

"What are you doing?" inquired his friend.

"*I am listening for the tramp of the coming millions!*" replied Webster, his face aglow with confidence in the future greatness of his country.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 231. [2] Robert Burns.

II.

The Variety.

1. The variety is as great as the number. What a distance St. John has travelled! It is a long way for his feet from the shores of Galilee to the isle that is called Patmos; but how much farther for his heart, from his hope for the seed of Abraham to this assurance of all nations and tongues! There is nothing that some men seem so sure about as the limitation of our Lord's outlook. It is true He was not sent in His lifetime on earth but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But it was Christ, and not St. Paul, that enabled St. John to see the variety of the redeemed.

2. Every nation, and every variety of individual in every nation, every variety of gift and ministry—singers in choirs, nurses and doctors, visitors of the sick, priests, prophets, pastors, missioners, Bible-women, mothers, daughters—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." These are of the redeemed now. They do not need to wait for death to find their place in St. John's majestic vision. "For all the saints who from their labours rest"—yes, certainly, for Livingstone and Gordon and Shaftesbury, for Lawrence and Martyn and Duff and Grenfell—but also for the saints who are still bearing the burden and heat of the day. O blessed union, fellowship Divine! "Next to the presence of God and the Lamb," says Hort, "the highest blessing is the presence of them who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

3. What an encouragement it is to the missionary! "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." We are only now realizing that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the communication of the love of God to the hearts of men; that Christianity is a spiritual power and impulse stirring all that is great and noble in the soul, not only making righteousness a dream, but also making it a dream realized in hearts transformed into the image of God. Christianity is indigenous in every land and among every race because Christianity is the love of God outflowing to men—and that primal feeling of love every race knows.

But it is only in this last generation that we have realized it. In times of strife Christianity was thought of as a system which put iron in the blood. When we pierced down to the heart of Christianity, felt its throb again, realized that it was the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, then the way opened out for the sending of the gospel to the heathen world, and the nations were moved at its approach, as if they, too, were prepared for its coming.

There never has been a day of opportunity like this in the history of the Church and the world. The way is open; the door is open; the hearts of the nations are open. Will the Churches rise to the great call which summons them? Will they, failing to obey Christ, and failing to communicate Him, themselves lose Him? Is the element of the heroic still vigorous in Christianity? Does Christ still stir the hearts of His people so that they are willing to die for Him?

"A people is upon thee loving death as thou lovest life," was the message of the Mohammedan of old to his enemy. Is there still in Christendom the spirit which loves death for Christ's sake? If there be, then in this, the great day of opportunity, the tide of the world's destiny will be turned towards the Lord Jesus Christ. And it will be turned. For the Spirit is still in the midst of the Church, and until the end adoring lips will cry—

"Now let me burn out for God."[1]

¶ In the early days of New Zealand history, Governor (afterwards Sir) George Grey was walking, on a lovely Sunday afternoon, with Bishop Selwyn. They entered a tent, followed by a messenger bearing dispatches which had just arrived. One letter to the bishop brought the news of the death of Siapo, a Loyalty Islander, who had become a Christian, and was being educated at Auckland under the bishop's supervision. Overcome with grief, Selwyn burst into tears. Then turning to the Governor, he exclaimed, "Why, you have not shed a single tear!" "No," replied Grey, "I have been so wrapped in thought that I could not weep. I have been thinking of the prophecy that men of every race were to be assembled in the kingdom of heaven. I have tried to imagine the joy and wonder prevailing there at the coming of Siapo, the first Christian of his race. He would be glad evidence that another people of the world had been added to the teaching

[1] N. Maclean, *Can the World be Won for Christ?* 174.

of Christ." "Yes, yes," said Selwyn, "that is the true idea to entertain; I shall weep no more!"

III.

The Unity.

The multitude that no man can number is a Society. Their robes have become white because every stain of selfishness has been washed from them by the blood of the Lamb. Their palms show that they have gotten the victory over those causes which have destroyed the unity of kindreds and nations here. There is no dull uniformity, no single tongue: all is harmonious amidst diversity. Here, some have glorified power to the destruction of meekness; some have pretended that meekness is incompatible with strength. There, all give glory to Him that sitteth on the throne, *and* to the Lamb. Here, men who are sealed in the Name of God have thought that they glorified that Name most by declaring His damnation of His enemies or theirs. In that company, the one word which is connected with the Divine Name is *salvation*—salvation from the curse that men have made for themselves.

¶ "All nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues."—Never, since Babel, a unison; no longer, since the first Christian Pentecost, an inevitable discord: for ever and ever, a harmony. Babel dissolved the primitive unison into discord: Pentecost reduced the prevalent discord to contingent harmony, but reclaimed it not into unison. Unison is faultless: harmony is perfect. On earth the possibility of harmony entails the corresponding possibility of discord. Even on earth, however, whoever chooses can himself or herself keep time and tune: which will be an apt prelude for keeping eternity and tune in heaven.[1]

¶ A Canadian bishop has lately described what he saw and heard one night. He and some friends were on one side of a great Canadian river; a company of Christian Indians on the other. As the Englishmen gazed into the falling fire they heard a hymn across the river. This was succeeded by a hush. The song of the Red men across the water drew out a song from them, and that touched the Indians to a prayer whose measured tones just reached them across the water. O sweet communion of

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 231.

saints! "What was the river between?" asks the bishop. What, indeed? On one side there rose prayers and praises in the language of Milton and Shakespeare, of saints and sages; on the other, in words borrowed by the wild hunters from the glee of the waterfall or from the sighing of the pinewood. Yet once again the whole earth seemed to be "of one language and of one lip." Out from the darkness there rose not a mere picture—a reality. Not the white Christ, with the blood-drops trickling down; but the living Christ, radiant and mighty. The harp of language with its myriad chords rang out through the starry silence. Not the Indian and the English only. Not one language was quite absent from the chorus. No longer Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. "All nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues."[1]

¶ Principal D. W. Simon illustrates (*Twice Born*, 194) the unity and diversity of the redeemed by quotations from the hymns of the world. First of all he shows how widespread is the acceptance of a hymn like "Rock of Ages." Our English hymn-books, he goes on, teem with translations from the German, with translations from the Latin, with translations from the Greek—"Jesus! Thy boundless love to me" (German); "Jesus! Thou joy of loving hearts!" (Latin); "O happy band of pilgrims" (Greek). It is an illustration that might be worked out easily and with much effect.

1. They are one in their *Position* or *Standing*—"standing before the throne and before the Lamb." Once they were "strangers and foreigners"; now they are "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Once they were far off; now they are made nigh. Once they were afraid to draw near; now they have access with boldness. "Happy are thy men," said the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, "which stand continually before thee." Happy are they who stand before the throne and before the Lamb. It is this that marks the difference between the first vision and the second, between the worship of the Creator and the worship of the Redeemer. They who worship the Creator veil their faces with their wings; every one of the redeemed, however vast their number and various, is made nigh by the blood of Christ.

¶ Longings for pardon, for rest, for peace are met by the simple acceptance of this Saviour, whose blood speaks peace to the conscience and whose love brings rest to the heart. So powerful is this sprinkled blood that it can carry a sinner into

[1] Archbishop Alexander, *Verbum Crucis*, 126.

the holiest of all to hold communion at the Mercy-seat with a reconciled God and Father. "One touch of this cleansing blood seals the soul for service." Its voice—like the sound of the waves on the shore—is ever speaking peace in a believer's ear, "sometimes loudly, sometimes less clearly, but always speaking." "If a believer can do without the blood he is a backslider." "At the Bush Moses was forbidden to draw nigh, but afterwards on the Mount he went up into the very presence of God. What made the difference? At the Bush *there was no sacrifice.*"[1]

2. *In Character*—"arrayed in white robes." The white robes, we are afterwards told, are the righteous acts of the saints. They are an exchange for the "filthy rags" of selfishness and self-righteousness. If still here, they may not be wholly white; but even here He sees them in their shield, and looks upon them in the face of His anointed, and He sees no iniquity in Jacob and no perverseness in His Israel. And yet it is no hollow, fictitious righteousness. Their will consents. They themselves have washed their own robes—only they have not washed them in their own blood; they have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¶ It is related of Queen Victoria that one day she visited a paper-mill, the owner of which showed her through the works, and, not knowing who she was, took her, among other places, into the rag-room. When she saw the filthy rags, out of which the paper is made, she exclaimed, "How can these ever be made white?" "Ah, lady!" was the reply, "I have a chemical process of great power, by which I can take the colour even out of these rags!" Before she left, the owner discovered that she was the Queen. A few days after, the Queen found lying upon her writing-desk some of the most beautifully polished writing-paper she had ever seen. On each sheet were stamped the letters of her name, and her likeness. There was also a note from the mill-owner, asking her to accept a specimen of the paper, with the assurance that every sheet was manufactured out of the dirty rags she had seen.

3. *In Feeling*—"and palms in their hands." Archbishop Trench will have it that it is a feeling of joy. For the Apocalypse, he says, moves altogether in the circle of sacred imagery; all its symbols and images are derived from the Old Testament. And so he refers to the Feast of Tabernacles, when with branches of palm trees the people rejoiced before the Lord seven days. But

[1] *Reminiscences of Andrew A. Bonar*, 134.

the Seer of the Apocalypse was certainly familiar with the palm as a symbol of victory. And perhaps the two ideas are not so far apart. If it was joy, it was the joy of a great triumph, triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil; the joy of being more than conquerors through Him that loved them. In the presence of Christ has always been fulness of joy, downward from the time in which "your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day."

It is more natural to think that the mention of the palms here, together with the expression in ver. 15, "He that sitteth on the throne shall *spread his tabernacle over them*," is intended to indicate that the redeemed are represented as keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. At that feast not only was it the custom for the faithful to dwell in booths or tents, but also in the festal solemnities to carry in their hands palm branches with myrtles and willows, in fulfilment of the charge in Lev. xxiii. 40: "Ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, *branches of palm trees*, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook." These palm branches, or *lulabs*, as they were called, were borne in procession by the worshippers on each of the seven days of the solemnity, when they accompanied the priest to the pool of Siloam, as he went to draw water from thence, to bring it to the Temple and pour it out by the altar. So this great multitude which St. John sees bear palms in their hands when the Lamb is about to lead them to no earthly fountain or pool, but to "living fountains of waters." This view seems also to obtain a further confirmation from the fact that the thought of the tabernacle feast is not unknown to the prophets of the Old Testament in connexion with the future of the Church of God, *e.g.*, Zech. xiv. 16. It was not merely that this feast formed the most joyous of all the festive seasons of Israel; it was rather that it was the "feast of ingathering," a sort of harvest home, and was thus regarded as pointing forward to the final harvest when Israel's mission should be completed, and all nations should be gathered unto the Lord.

¶ The Feast of Tabernacles commences five days after the Day of Atonement and lasts seven days. Its observance is commanded in the Mosaic Law (Lev. 23^{34}), and its purpose is there explained as to commemorate the way in which the Israelites dwelt in booths (*sukkoth*) during their journey through the wilderness.

Every Jew who owns a court or garden is required to erect a

booth, or something more or less equivalent, and to dwell in it—or at least have meals in it—while the feast lasts. In order that the character of the original booth may as far as possible be retained, the modern counterpart is very lightly constructed. It "must not be covered with fixed boards and beams or with canvas, but with detached branches of trees, plants, flowers, and leaves, in such a manner that the covering is not quite impenetrable to wind and rain, or starlight." The booths are adorned with garlands, flowers, and the like.

In the Synagogue the ancient and original character of the celebration as a Harvest Festival—the "Feast of Ingathering," or thanksgiving for the gathered produce of the fields and gardens—is made prominent in various ways. The Synagogue itself is decorated with plants and fruits; and there are the palm-branch processions. The worshipper takes the palm-branch (*lulab*) in the right hand, and the *ethrog* or citron (fixed in a metal receptacle) in the left, reciting as he does so the following blessings:

(1) Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us with Thy commandments, and commanded us to take up the palm-branch.

(2) Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast preserved us alive, sustained us, and brought us to enjoy this season.

These are lifted up during the recitation of the *Hallel* (Pss. 113–118) in morning prayer. At the end of the *Musaf* or "Additional" prayer, a procession is formed, and the worshippers with the citron and palm-branch, make a circuit while certain prayers called "Hosannas" (*Hosha'anoth*) are recited.

The joyous character of the festival finds its fullest expression on the seventh day, the popular name of which is *Hosha'na Rabba* ("The great Hosanna"). It is so called because the exclamation "Hosanna," and the "Hosanna-processions" are much more frequent than on the preceding six days. Seven processions take place round the whole Synagogue, a separate "hosanna" hymn being sung each time.

At the completion of the processions, the worshippers being now in their places, the *lulab* is laid aside and the willow-bunch taken up, and a few more poetical pieces are said. All join in the messianic hymn beginning "A voice brings glad tidings, brings glad tidings, and says." Then with the utterance of a petition for forgiveness of sins each shakes or strikes the willow-bunch on the desk before him till its leaves fall off, and throws it away.[1]

[1] W. O. E. Oesterley and G. H. Box, *The Religion and Worship of the Synagogue*, 397, 401.

4. *In Occupation*—"they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation." Their occupation is worship, of course. All their life is worship. St. John cannot conceive any one of the redeemed otherwise occupied than in worshipping, whether he is in the home, or the field, or the market-place. But the special form of the worship that attracts his attention is praise. Their great cry is a song, and there is no discord in it. Every person of every tribe has a voice and sings in harmony with all the rest.

Their cry is the acknowledgment that their salvation—the salvation which they now taste—is due not to themselves, but to their God and to the Lamb. The salvation here must be taken in its most comprehensive sense, including every deliverance—from the curse of law, from the power of sin, and from the perils of life. This is "the voice of rejoicing and salvation which is in the tabernacles of the righteous," when the Lord, who is their strength and song, "has become their salvation."

¶ *Salvation to our God,* our salvation is *unto,* is wholly due to, our God. "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord": it is all His, from first to last; every step of the way, and its termination. Yes, self-confidence, self-righteousness, self-exaltation, vanity, there, in heaven, in God's presence, will be as impossible as they are natural and common here. . . . The "great multitude which no man could number" of the ransomed and saved, standing in heaven "before the throne" of God, join with one voice in ascribing solely to Him and to the Lamb the praise of their salvation. And the Angels, "in whose presence," while earth lasted, "there was joy over every sinner," one by one, "who repented," may well rejoice, with a joy accumulated and intensified, over the final ingathering of all who have been saved. Most of all, well may they echo the ascription of all glory to God and to the Lamb. *Amen,* even so; it is indeed He who hath kept us from our fall; it is indeed He who hath brought you back from yours![1]

What are these lovely ones, yea, what are these?
  Lo these are they who for pure love of Christ
Stripped off the trammels of soft silken ease,
  Beggaring themselves betimes, to be sufficed
Throughout heaven's one eternal day of peace:
  By golden streets, thro' gates of pearl unpriced,
They entered on the joys that will not cease,
  And found again all firstfruits sacrificed.

[1] C. J. Vaughan, *Lectures on the Revelation of St. John,* 192.

And wherefore have you harps, and wherefore palms,
  And wherefore crowns, O ye who walk in white?
Because our happy hearts are chanting psalms,
  Endless Te Deum for the ended fight;
While thro' the everlasting lapse of calms
  We cast our crowns before the Lamb our Might.[1]

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poetical Works*, 212.

The Noble Army of Martyrs.

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The Noble Army of Martyrs.

And he said to me, These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.—Rev. vii. 14.

The Revelation of St. John is a magnificent spectacular prophecy. It sets forth great principles in bold and brilliant pictures. It uses the bitter experiences which befell Christian hearts in dreadful persecutions, as the means of showing forth the Divine providence and purpose of deliverance. With the blood of present martyrdoms for a symbol, it depicts the struggle and woe of a world at strife. And with the white light shining in the Christian faith, it shows forth the blessed consummation of victory, the triumph of the Christ. It is one of the most stirring of writings. It moves the heart because it is so filled with the pathos and the tragedy of those days of bloody persecution in which it was written. "Without tears," says Bengel, "it was not written; without tears it cannot be understood." It is a set of dazzling pictures, "wherein," says Herder, the great poet-theologian, "are set forth the rise, the visible existence, and the general future of Christ's Kingdom, in figures and similitudes of His first coming to terrify and to console."

In the passage which stands as the text, we have one of our glimpses of the victory which in those days of tribulation and anguish must have seemed so very remote and hard to believe. The innumerable throng in white robes, with palms in their hands, wear and bear the symbols of triumph. They stand forth in the din and clash of the contending forces depicted in this book, the happy participants in the glory and the purity of the victorious Lamb. Their white robes mean holiness. Their waving palms mean victory. The two symbols standing together set forth the triumph of holiness. That is the burden of the whole book. It is the glorious message which shines down to us from all these stormy pictures. The victory of the good, the end of

strife in the purification of the world—this is the great thought poured out of the heart of that mystic utterance of the beloved Apostle. Victory through struggle and tribulation—that is the outcome of the world and the creation, prophesied in this vision of the multitude in white robes.

But the form and suggestions of the vision bring to the mind not alone the victory, but the means as well. In the very thought of a victory, there is also the thought of a battle. Winning comes only of striving. The creation is to make its way to this victory through struggle. And the same thought which carries the mind to the consummation of toil and suffering carries it back also to the weariness and the pain and the conflict out of which that end has been wrought. "Lo, a great multitude, clothed in white robes, and with palms"—"These are they which come out of the great tribulation." There is a long look ahead in these words. But there is also a long look backward, as they, in one sentence, not only forecast the future but sum up the past.[1]

¶ It is told of Robert Burns that he could never read the closing verses of this chapter without tears. It is no wonder. The poet is a man of larger heart, of broader and keener sympathy than other men, and with a corresponding power of expression. What all men feel he feels more, and can express better. All of us feel that in this and like words of the Holy Book, something in our hearts is met; a something which we may never have been able to define or utter—a faint vision of blessedness—a belief that at some time, we know not when, in some world or region we know not where, the brightest of those things which the soul can desire or conceive is possible to man.[2]

I.

The Tribulation.

1. Perhaps a more literal rendering of the original Greek would be "friction," the rubbing which goes to make the fine polish, or the exquisite edge. And so we might render the text: "These are they which come out of the refining processes of great friction." But the translator's word "tribulation" is both apt and

[1] J. C. Adams, *The Leisure of God*, 219.
[2] J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, 271.

striking. Its original meaning is full of interest. It is derived from the *tribula* or *tribulum* which was used to crush the straw and separate the grain from the chaff. In its spiritual application it means chastening, the purification of the desires, the removal, through discipline of the soul, of what mars its progress, and the power of assimilating fresh influences of good. There are different kinds of tribulation. It may be the crushing on the wheel, or the stake of fire, or the slow, patient application of daily trials. It may be sheer savagery, or it may be the mere wear and tear of common life, some crushing burden, some hidden struggle against temptation, or grinding care, or sad bereavement, such as may possibly come, or it may be some slight misunderstanding, or misrepresentation, or the weariness and painfulness of commonest details.

¶ I remember often, when a boy in my father's barn, turning round by the handle of the fanners the big wooden fan inside, which by its motion created an artificial wind, blowing away, from the confused mixed stuff from the threshing-floor poured into its funnel, the chaff and broken bits of straw, and passing through the clean, assorted grain in a heap by itself. This instrument is very ancient in its form and use. It is a legacy from the Romans, and was called by them *tribulum*. It is from the Latin name of this instrument that our English word *tribulation* comes. The early Christians compared a trial or trouble to a passing through the *tribulum* or fanners, in order that by it their nature might be winnowed, that they might be sifted as wheat, and all their chaff blown away; and therefore they called it a tribulation when it had that effect. They said that "we must through many tribulations enter into the Kingdom of God"; and they were taught that this was not an evil but a good, that sanctified affliction to the believer was gain and not loss. It was a tribulation that separated the precious from the vile, that purified the nature of the believer, but preserved himself unhurt for the heavenly garner.[1]

2. But the text speaks of *the* great tribulation. So it is not the general sorrow and perplexity of human life that is referred to here; we must not compare this text with such passages as that in which Eliphaz, the Temanite, tells us that "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." It is the tribulation which Christ foretold as the immediate result of His coming, the

[1] H. Macmillan, *The Touch of God*, 150.

prospect of which was before Him from the first, making Him speak of His mission as one not of peace but of a sword, and which, in almost His last discourse in Jerusalem, He declared would be wider and greater than the world had ever known before. To the early disciples it took the form of persecution; and to this the text immediately refers, with this a great part of the Book of the Revelation is concerned.

The writer had lived through a period, perhaps more than one period, of persecution and martyrdom. He had seen the powers of this world employing all their resources to quench the light of Christ, and exterminate the hated sect which bore His name. He had seen or heard of dear friends slaughtered, Paul beheaded, Peter crucified, all or nearly all his fellow-apostles done to death, and a host of less known believers sacrificed to Rome's fury and Rome's lust. He had lived through days which it is difficult for us to imagine, when every Christian, in a sense, died daily, and when nearly every Christian household, like Egypt of old, had at least one dead: and he had watched them calmly facing all these terrors, and holding fast the faith with courage and patience which never faltered, and dying with triumphant hope when their hour came. He had seen *all* this, and now he looks up, and for a moment the veil of the unseen is drawn aside, and he has a vision of these once suffering saints in their glory, wearing the white robes of spotless souls, and waving the palm branches of victory. They have conquered in the earthly fight and received their reward, and they now serve God day and night in the inner temple. St. John speaks of them as a multitude which no man can number, out of all nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues, all of whom had come out of great tribulation and been perfected, like the Master Himself, by their sufferings.

¶ Christ came not to send peace on earth but a sword; against the restless and resistless force of the new religion the gates of hell should not prevail. But polytheism could not be dethroned without a struggle; nor mankind regenerated without a baptism of blood. Persecution, in fact, is the other side of aggression, the inevitable outcome of a truly missionary spirit; the two are linked together as action and reaction. To the student of ancient history all this will appear intelligible, perhaps even axiomatic. "The birth-throes of the new religion must needs be agonizing. The religion of the civilized world was passing through Medea's

cauldron." Out of the cauldron there would come a new world, but not without fire and blood. Persecution, in short, is no mere incident in the life of the Church which might possibly have been avoided. Not so do we read either history or Christianity. Persecution rather was the necessary antagonism of certain fundamental principles and policies in the Empire of Cæsar and the Kingdom of Christ.

By a sure instinct the Church discerned in the death of the martyr the repetition, not the less real because faint, of the central Sacrifice of Calvary. "As we behold the martyrs," writes Origen, "coming forth from every Church to be brought before the tribunal, we see in each the Lord Himself condemned." So Irenæus speaks of the martyrs as "endeavouring to follow in the footsteps of Christ," and of St. Stephen, as "imitating in all things the Master of Martyrdom." In the early Church the imitation of Christ, as a formal principle in ethics, played but a secondary part, so far, at any rate, as the average member was concerned. The martyrs and confessors alone were thought of as actually following and imitating Jesus; they alone were the "true disciples" of the Master. It was enough for the servant that he should be as his Lord.[1]

3. It is impossible, however, to confine the application of the text to the martyrs of the first century. The Seer beheld "a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and people and tongues"; and he may have viewed as one great tribulation all the distresses that afflict the Christian generations. Just as the ten thousand lamps in a huge city blend their upcast rays into the cloud of red mist which invests it at nightfall, so the sorrows of Christ's servants in all ages gather themselves into one great lurid mass before the view of the Seer. It is from the world's great storm-centre of violence and whirling wrath that the children of light emerge into victory. "The great tribulation." Common causes give rise to it. The stress and pain of the individual disciple is not peculiar to his own lot, but is part of a whole.

Some epochs may be marked by violent forms of persecution and distress, but in every age hostile tempers work against the outward happiness and well-being of Christ's followers. The hounded apostle of the first century and the uncompromising confessor of the last stand beneath the same eclipse. There is under every form of government the same prejudice against the

[1] H. B. Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church*, 21, 51.

plain, pure ethic of Jesus Christ, the same tendency to pitiless rancour, the same sensibility to pain in the victims, the same subjection to death. This hostile temper works in one age by the engine of physical torture, and in another by sneer, slander, and social ostracism. The hot, bitter springs from which tears come are the same in all ages, and never run quite dry. That which the Seer here describes is a specific, undivided, palpitating pain running through the frame of Christ's mystical body, filling up in all ages that which is behind of His sufferings.

¶ It is quite the usual thing in the world for saintly men to be persecuted. It has been, as it were, agreed between God and His servants on one part, and the devil and his own on the other part, that the latter should persecute the former; that the good should suffer and be tortured, that the wicked should exercise upon them their malice, and that as long as they live in the world these should triumph, the others weep, and that after a short time all things be reversed. Let the wicked now raise up false testimonies, crushing them with affronts; let them be cast into prisons, exiled, covered with miseries as by a mantle; let them be loaded with all the misfortunes that can be devised, until they end this life by a sad death; all, all will be in the end the fulfilment of the arrangement assented to very long ago between the ancient serpent and man: "She shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." There is no need to fill pages with examples. It suffices for my purpose to say that no one can meditate on the life of any saintly man without discovering something of this, and in many of them a great deal; indeed, this fact has come to be so widely acknowledged that we ourselves do not hold a saint to be so who does not pass through all this.[1]

4. The imagery of this book seems to suggest that the stages of the tribulation are so ordered that it achieves the ends of a great spiritual discipline. The convulsions which rend the earth are one and all determined by movements before the throne of God in heaven. The saints are sealed ere the restless forces of destruction rush forth upon their errands, and the trials which are to prove high qualities take place under the eye of a watching God and amidst the ministries of His messengers. The distracted world is not a sheer anarchy of diabolism, as the sufferers might be tempted to think. The Sovereignty in heaven directs the path

[1] F. J. de Siguenza, *The Life of Saint Jerome* (ed. 1907), 374.

of the storms, and the storms do not break till the elect of God are made ready for their ordeals. The appointed cycles of tribulation test the faithful as they tested Job in the ancient days. Scenes of disquiet and calamity cannot work the spiritual havoc one might fear, making religious faith all but impossible. Innumerable hosts come forth out of the great tribulation. It is indeed the very discipline that prepares God's people for their triumph. As needful is it that the children of light before the throne should be tried and perfected by their keen and manifold distresses, as that they should be washed from their sins in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. It is because their fidelity has been verified in the struggles of the past that they are before the throne, to the praise and glory of Him who redeemed them. They are welcomed with tenderness and fostered with exquisite care because of all that through which they have passed. The waving of the palm branches would have been mere pantomime, and the ringing jubilations an empty stage-chorus, apart from the stress, conflict, and vicissitude over which the Lord's people have triumphed.

¶ The Rev. J. W. Dickson of St. Helens supplies the following among the *obiter dicta* dropped by Dr. Paton during his lectures at the Institute at Nottingham:—"When Richard Baxter was told that he would have a glorious reward because he had suffered so much in the cause of Christ, he replied that he didn't want any reward other than a little more persecution. He was not weary, but willing to have more of it, if God willed it. He gloried in tribulation, like Paul, and panted for more of it, resolutely assured that no foe could work anything upon him other than the will of God desired and permitted."[1]

¶ Presumably for most of us tribulation rather than ease constructs the safe road and the firm stepping-stone. Better to be taught with thorns of the wilderness and briars, than on no wise to be taught. Better great tribulation now than unexampled tribulation hereafter.

Good Lord, to-day
I scarce find breath to say:
    Scourge, but receive me.
For stripes are hard to bear, but worse
Thy intolerable curse;
    So do not leave me.

[1] *John Brown Paton*, by his Son (1914), 362.

Good Lord, lean down
In pity tho' Thou frown;
Smite, but retrieve me:
For so Thou hold me up to stand
And kiss Thy smiting hand,
It less will grieve me.

"Tribulation," that is, sifting: sifting reclaims and releases good from bad, while aught of good remains. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."[1]

II.

The Triumph.

1. They all *come out* of the great tribulation. Now they celebrate their triumph. Every one of them carries the palm of victory. Some reminiscence of the Feast of Tabernacles perhaps lies in the background of the picture. The Jews were accustomed to observe that season of rejoicing by putting up triumphal arches, camping out upon the tops of their houses in arbours of evergreens and waving branches of trees, thus testifying to their joy at escaping from the hand of Pharaoh, and from the terrible plagues which had blasted the country of their sojourn. This vision assures the exiled Seer that the life beyond the veil is a festival of victory. He had perhaps been tempted to look upon himself and his companions in tribulation as defeated, crushed, fatally discredited, and overthrown. But the victims of a pagan persecuting Imperialism are now seen to be victors, and they ascribe their salvation to God and to the Lamb, who Himself conquered sublimely at the cross in His apparent overthrow. They have risen above those judgments of wrath which a retributive Providence let loose for a time upon the world to desolate the adversaries of Christ's Kingdom. They have triumphed over unseen hosts, leagued together against God's elect and the cause they had at heart. Through faith they have prevailed against the wrath of Antichrist, and the great pagan empires are led captive

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 235.

to adorn their triumph. They have proved stronger than their own frailties in all the distresses appointed for the testing of their fidelity. By their contemporaries they were counted as filth and offscouring. They left the world as defeated men, unpitied as they were thrown to the wild beasts, scoffed at as the sword fell upon them; but they reappear in the realms of light "more than conquerors."

The palm, among many of the ancient nations, was an emblem of victory. Hence its branches were used to adorn triumphal processions. The general whose victories the triumph was intended to celebrate carried a small branch of it in his hand, and was thus recognized as a conqueror. Therefore when the redeemed are described as having "palms in their hands," we are reminded that they were once soldiers who were not ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, but fought manfully under His banner, and by the strength of His arm completely conquered every enemy. The saints on earth indeed are warring the same warfare in which these glorified beings were engaged, and are continually obtaining victories in it; but then they must wait till all the days of their warfare are accomplished before they can have the triumphal chariot and the palm. The soldier never triumphs till the war is ended, and the enemy completely subdued. The saints in heaven have finished the painful conflict, and are now gone up for their reward to Jehovah's temple.

¶ In the spiritual realm there is no such thing as absolute and conclusive victory. We must not imagine that Adèle Kamm spent her latter years in undisturbed tranquillity and peace. Like an Alpine climber, who before he can reach the topmost peak must make his toilsome way along the edge of a precipice, she had to strain every nerve in order to keep her footing. It is not surprising to learn that she had to fight many a hard and lonely conflict, and though she nearly always managed to meet her visitors with a smile, yet when night came, and she was alone, the almost intolerable suffering would sometimes wring from her bitter tears. Either from stoicism or pride she would hide this feeling from those whom she did not know well; and she never spoke of it to those who depended on her brave example for inspiration. On the 9th of November 1909 she wrote to Miss Schlumberger:

"If you only knew, Lily, how strange it seems to me to have to struggle to live, when all the time I feel an irresistible longing to be with Jesus Christ. From month to month He becomes

more wonderfully attractive to me, His Light seems more radiant, His words more living and deeper in meaning, and I feel so trustful, so happy, so joyful, that it is with real difficulty that I make myself stay here when I want to fly away, to throw off the burden of this suffering body, and to penetrate into that mysterious Beyond, to enter fully into the wonder of that intense Divine Love! Still, I am a very ordinary mortal, and it has been my habit ever since I was a child to put duty before inclination, and this view of things helps me more than I can say at this critical moment. Duty first! Those are my orders! and I must stick to my post and not neglect anything for that; I believe that I can live for a good while longer if only I am brave."[1]

2. Those who came out of the great tribulation are arrayed in white robes. Their attire, as well as the palms they carry, proclaim their victory. White robes suggest that they are in the act of triumph, and occupied in a scene of rejoicing. And in this respect also their robes have been "washed and made white." In their unredeemed condition they were captives, not conquerors; slaves, not kings; rebels, not priests; miserable victims, not rejoicing sons. But now all this is changed. Heaven rejoices over them as the lost found and the dead come to life, and they share in the joy. But it is all founded on the blood of the Redeemer. No doubt their rest after toil and their bliss after pain are augmented by the past of their own history, yet the ground of all their joy and triumph is the blood of Christ. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb and for the testimony of Jesus. It was given them even when they suffered for His sake, and they were made more than conquerors through Him that loved them.

¶ Often when generals have returned from battle they and the warriors have been clothed in white, or have ridden upon white horses. True, the Romans adopted purple as their imperial colour, and well they might, for their victories and their rule were alike bloody and cruel; but the Christ of God sets forth His gentle and holy victories by white; it is on a "white cloud" that He shall come to judge the world, and His seat of judgment shall be "the great white throne." Upon a "white horse" He shall ride, and all the armies of heaven shall follow Him on white horses. Lo, He is clothed with a "white" garment down to the feet. Thus has He chosen white as the symbolic colour of His victorious kingdom, aud so the redeemed wear it, even the newly born,

[1] *A Living Witness: The Life of Adèle Kamm* (1914), 165, 169.

freshly escaped out of the great tribulation, because they are all of them more than conquerors. They wear the victor garb and bear the palm which is the victor symbol.[1]

(1) White suggests the immaculate *purity of character of the redeemed.* White signifies perfection; it is not so much a colour as the harmonious union and blending of all the hues, colours, and beauties of light. In the characters of just men made perfect we have the combination of all virtues, the balancing of all excellences, a display of all the beauties of grace. Are they not like their Lord, and is He not all beauties in one? Here a saint has an evident excess of the red of courage, or the blue of constancy, or the violet of tenderness, and we have to admire the varied excellences and lament the multiform defects of the children of God; but up yonder each saint will combine in his character all things that are lovely and of good report, and his garments will be always white to indicate completeness, as well as spotlessness of character.

¶ What a miracle of grace! Yon clouds that walk in brightness beside the noonday sun transformed, transfigured by the marvellous processes of Nature from the briny sea, and the brimming river, and the standing pool, and the swampy meadow, and the foul marsh; but more marvellous the transformation when those who were sinners once walk in white beside the dazzling whiteness of the King of kings, and before the blaze of that great white throne on which He sits.[2]

(2) These white robes of victory and purity are also *the uniform of service.* A uniform usually signifies service; the soldier's and the sailor's uniform speaks of the particular service in which they are engaged. The nurse's mantle, the scholar's gown, the priest's robes, all speak of special work. These are clothed after a special manner, and their distinctive clothing signifies honourable and responsible service. Their uniform is the sign of their responsibility, their clothes are symbols of their high calling. In the very beginning of this book, in its opening vision, which is a revelation of the Head of the Church, the risen Son of Man, even He, too, is revealed as specially clothed in the royal uniform of His Heavenly occupation. He is girt about the breasts with a girdle—that is to say, He is a Priest on active service. He is also a King, ruling from His throne in justice and in truth. He is the risen, glorious,

[1] C. H. Spurgeon. [2] J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, 277.

acting Priest-King. His clothing symbolizes His office and His work. So, too, do those garments of the saints, those blood-washed garments of white. They mean honour, victory; yes, but also service. Therefore are they before the throne and serve Him. They are clothed for their Heavenly work. Thus, then, is it with the Church in Heaven, and that, too, is the calling of the Church below. We are called in Christ Jesus to co-operation in His vineyard, to understand His purpose, and to carry out His plans.

¶ In "Sartor Resartus" Carlyle lays hold practically of this truth, and with his great imagination on bold wing, and with his wonderful humour coruscating and breaking out into lambent flame, he speaks of many things as clothes, and of the significance of clothes as seen in a great many things, and urges that however a man is clothed, such garments only mean responsibility and service. Rank, and honour, and titles, these are clothes in the thought of the great thinker. Social station, reputation, and privilege, these are a kind of clothing, or uniform, too. The judge's office, the prophet's calling, the king's throne, what are they all but symbols and garments? And so we speak about men being clothed with honour, clothed with authority, or clothed with power. And going off on the eagle wing of his magnificent imagination and sweeping through great circles of truth, he speaks even of Nature herself—wonderful and glorious Nature—tripping forth in all the beauty of her summer raiment, or austere in her winter garments, as the time-vesture of God. But all such dress symbolizes something, and most of it calls to service and means responsibility. Apply this truth anywhere and you will find it true, but it is especially true in regard to the spiritual calling and honour conferred by Christ on Christian people. We are redeemed, honoured, crowned—for what? For enjoyment, for self-satisfaction, for indulgence, even refined and selfish indulgence in connection with religion? Never. We are redeemed, honoured, crowned, to serve.[1]

(3) White is also *the colour of joy.* Almost all nations have adopted it as most suitable for bridal array, and therefore these happy spirits have put on their bridal robes, and are ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Though they are waiting for the resurrection, yet are they waiting with their bridal garments on, waiting and rejoicing, waiting and chanting their Redeemer's praises, for they feast with Him till He shall descend to consum-

[1] D. L. Ritchie, *Peace the Umpire*, 162.

mate their bliss by bringing their bodies from the grave to share with them in the eternal joy.

¶ One of Dr. Paton's former students, who took notes of his lectures, gives examples of his teaching on the great themes of the ministry. Speaking of heaven, the doctor said: "Fellowship with God—that is heaven. The full consummation of what we know of heaven will be in heaven only; but heaven is not to be limited to the future life. Heaven is the perfect development and fulness of what we have the beginning of here. The fulness of joy and service and blessedness of what is in heaven, I know here and now in some measure. In part, but it is a part only. If we haven't heaven here, we shall not have heaven yonder. Christ is now at the right hand of God, and I am walking in fellowship with Him here now. And He has called me, by faith, up into fellowship with Him yonder. I see only darkly, but then I shall see fully and unveiled. The veil gets thinner and thinner day by day. Heaven is simply the perfection and fulness of what I have here. Heaven can give me no more, and I don't want heaven to give me more. It has been a great mistake of evangelical preaching to put all joy in the future world. It is not so. It is not 'the sacrifice of this world to the next.' It is the opposite. It is the great heaven—the eternal world—that has come down to us. Heaven has sacrificed itself for this world. Heaven was in Calvary, or it was nowhere. Suffer with Christ now, and you reign with Him now. The more I suffer, the more I reign with Him now. We are born here into life eternal—and thus into that promised heaven. But heaven is not our due because we suffer: it is a gracious gift of God."[1]

3. How came they by their robes? "They washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Their robes were white, like the white and glistering raiment of Christ when He was transfigured. The robes express their condition, as a purple robe expresses royalty, or filthy garments a condition of sin and misery. But it was not in love, or in any moral quality or virtue, that those robes were made white; it was in the blood of the Lamb. The figure of a washing, even of garments, in blood, is indeed a very strong one. In some Eastern countries of old, men who were oppressed with a sense of sin actually plunged their bodies into a stream or bath of animal blood, that their souls might be cleansed. But from such gross literalness we turn away.

[1] *John Brown Paton*, by his Son (1914), 368.

But let us never turn away from the truth which underlies the figure of garments made white by being washed in precious blood. There is cleansing for the soul in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus.

Now this is a material image which is used in the text, but of course no little child among us needs to be told that it is in some spiritual sense it must be understood. It is not in the literal sense that we are to understand these words. The human blood of Christ sprinkled upon us would not make our raiment white; and though it did, *that* would not bring us to heaven. Probably the Roman soldier who pierced the Saviour's side with his cruel spear, would be (in the literal sense) sprinkled with His precious blood: but *that* would not save him: he remained, spiritually, after that exactly what he had been before. To have our robes made white in the blood of the Lamb means two things. It means that our sins are pardoned for the sake of Christ's atoning sacrifice. And it means that our souls are made holy by the blessed Spirit Christ sent after He left this world. And there are two reasons why only those thus washed in the blood of Christ can be always before the throne of God. One is, They alone have a right to be there. The other is, They alone are fit to be there, and to be happy there.

¶ One night, during that terrible winter in the Crimean War, Duncan Matheson, the evangelist, was returning, weary and sad, from Sebastopol to his poor lodgings in the old stable at Balaklava. He had laboured all day with unflagging energy, and now his strength was gone. He was sickened with the sights he had seen, and was depressed with the thought that the siege was no nearer an end than ever. As he trudged along in the mud knee-deep, he happened to look up and noticed the stars shining calmly in the clear sky. Instinctively his weary heart mounted heaven-ward in sweet thoughts of the "rest that remaineth for the people of God," and he began to sing aloud the well-known scriptural verses:

How bright these glorious spirits shine!
Whence all their white array?
How came they to the blissful seats
Of everlasting day?

Lo! these are they from suff'rings great,
Who came to realms of light,
And in the blood of Christ have wash'd
Those robes which shine so bright.

Next day was wet and stormy, and when he went out to see what course to take, he came upon a soldier standing for shelter below the verandah of an old house. The poor fellow was in rags, and all that remained of shoes upon his feet were utterly insufficient to keep his naked toes from the mud. Altogether he looked miserable enough. The kind-hearted missionary spoke words of encouragement to the soldier, and gave him at the same time half a sovereign with which to purchase shoes, suggesting that he might be supplied by those who were burying the dead. The soldier offered his warmest thanks, and then said: "I am not what I was yesterday. Last night, as I was thinking of our miserable condition, I grew tired of life, and said to myself, Here we are, not a bit nearer taking that place than when we sat down before it. I can bear this no longer, and may as well try and put an end to it. So I took my musket and went down yonder in a desperate state about eleven o'clock; but as I got round the point, I heard some person singing, 'How bright these glorious spirits shine,' and I remembered the old tune and the Sabbath School where we used to sing it. I felt ashamed of being so cowardly, and said, Here is some one as badly off as myself, and yet he is not giving in. I felt he had something to make him happy of which I was ignorant, and I began to hope I too might get the same happiness. I returned to my tent, and to-day I am resolved to seek the one thing." "Do you know who the singer was?" asked the missionary. "No," was the reply. "Well," said the other, "It was I"; on which the tears rushed into the soldier's eyes, and he requested the Scripture-reader to take back the half-sovereign, saying, "Never, sir, can I take it from you, after what you have been the means of doing for me."[1]

(1) Mere tribulation will not necessarily make the robes white. Tribulation, or affliction, or oppression—call it which you will—is overruled by a miracle of Divine grace so as to benefit the believer, but in and of itself it is not the cleanser but the defiler of the soul. Affliction of itself does not sanctify anybody, but the reverse. Afflictions of themselves arouse to an unwonted energy the evil which is in us, and place us in positions where the rebellious heart is incited to forsake the Lord. This will be seen if we consider the matter closely. The great tribulation is, under some aspects of it, a sin-creating thing, and if the victorious ones had not perpetually gone to the blood they would never have had their garments white. It was that alone that made and

[1] J. Macpherson, *Life and Labours of Duncan Matheson*, 70.

kept them white; they were familiar with the atonement and knew its cleansing power.

(2) It is the blood of the Lamb that washes out the stains and makes the garments white. How often did the martyrs have their garments stained and soiled when enduring a violent death in the arena; but in the very act of shedding their blood they became identified with Christ and so entered into the fruits of His victory. Robes that are washed in the blood would be expected to come out red; why should the result be so unlike the process? Because the process of sacrifice which makes me pure must leave no trace of itself. The blood which washes out my stains would, if perpetuated, be itself a stain. There can be no cross in my completed life. There is a shadow in its dawn, but not in its day. There is a struggle in faith; there is a struggle in hope; but there is no struggle in love. There are some cures which leave a scar; the disease is gone, but the red mark is left which tells of pain. Not all blood washes white. There are struggles in which I conquer, but from which I yet come down with the shrunk sinew; the battle is over, but, even in the daybreak, the wound remains. I have won the fight, but I have lost youth's elastic spring; I halt upon my thigh. But the cross of Christ leaves on me no print of the nails. It heals its own scar. It dries its own blood. It wipes its own tears. It not only redeems, it *restores* my soul. It has no after-effects—no lameness, no sight of men like trees walking. There is no sense of langour, no feeling of soreness, no memory of pain. The cross of yesterday becomes the crown of to-day; the thorn of my winter is made the flower of my spring. The heart's bleeding is staunched when law is one with love.

(3) Each individual in the triumphal throng had to perform his part in cleansing his robes. They washed their own robes and made them white. Faith is a fact embedded deep in their history, for it links their present blessedness with their past experience. All-important and blessed record! We are not told where they were born, where they died, or in what style they lived, whether in royal palace or smoky hovel; whether in their natural characters they were brilliant or humble, wise or foolish. This only is recorded, and this of them all—they believed on Jesus; they trusted to His cross; they came guilty to the fountain which was opened there, and out of it they went, washed

and white, to heaven. If anything in the experience of the redeemed on earth be meant beyond this, it is their renewed and continual application to His blood for the pardon and cleansing of every day. Washed once for all and in one sense clean every whit, they need yet daily to wash the feet from the soil of sin that cleaves to them through time. And it is characteristic of Christ's redeemed ones that the nearer they get to heaven the more completely they depend on the atoning death of Christ; in all the world none but Christ, and in Christ nothing that absorbs them so much as "him crucified."

¶ While to those who are without, the necessary, the meritorious death of Christ remains the stumbling-block and stone of offence, the chosen point of attack, ever openly assaulted, ever secretly undermined, to those who are within, the Stone thus set at nought and rejected is still the head of the corner; it is still the tried stone, the sure foundation, the Rock whereof Faith speaks, "Set me upon it for it is higher than I," Love's sure, abiding Pillar of remembrance, whereon Love's secret is written and graven with a pen of iron for ever. *To them who believe Christ is precious.* . . . The death of Christ is that which most powerfully attracts the heart of man to God, and this because it is the strongest proof of love. Love kindles and calls forth love; "We count that," says John of Wessel, "to be the most lovable which we know to be the most loving." The love of Christ has achieved the greatest things, and hence must produce the most powerful effects; it has displayed the greatest devotedness, and consequently must possess the strongest attractive power.[1]

[1] Dora Greenwell, *The Covenant of Life* (ed. 1898), 47.

The Lamb as a Shepherd.

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THE LAMB AS A SHEPHERD.

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.—Rev. vii. 17.

1. THE seventh chapter of the Apocalypse contains the vision of the "multitude which no man could number," which is among the most familiar and most highly treasured passages in the book. The meaning of the vision stands little in need of explanation; its value is not to be enhanced by exposition. It speaks straight to the heart of every Christian. The picture of the Church triumphant, drawn "out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues," offering the praise of heaven to God and the Lamb; the question, "Who are these?" and its answer; the description of their privileges as the flock shepherded by the Lamb, the people of God's own care—these things speak for themselves. It is one of the many beautiful glimpses of the heavenly life which St. John gives us in this book of celestial visions. For a moment the veil is drawn aside, and we see the white-robed ones who have passed through great tribulation to their rest and reward. The figures used are suggestive of perfect and uninterrupted joy. The toils and pains and weariness of our mortal life have no place in the "land of pure delight." Hunger and thirst are unknown. There is no want or unsatisfied desire. No sleep is needed, for the day's work never tires, and the night is bright and animated as the day. The sunlight never burns, and there is no hot fever in the blood. The eyes are never dim with sorrow, for all tears are wiped away, and the purest and deepest longing of the religious soul is realized, for He whom they have loved dwells among them, and they do always behold His face.

2. The passage from which the text is taken is to a great extent made up of citations from the Old Testament. Isaiah furnishes St. John with his imagery and his language. "They

shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them" (Is. xlix. 10), and "the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Is. xxv. 8). But the quotation is wonderfully elevated and spiritualized in the New Testament vision; for instead of reading, as the Original does: "He that hath mercy on them shall lead them," we have here, "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd," and instead of their being led merely to "the springs of water," here we read that He leads them to "fountains of waters of life."

I.

The Lamb's Place of Honour.

1. Not in the confines of heaven, not on its distant borders, does the Lamb stand who shall pasture the redeemed. In the very centre and seat of power He has His place: He is the Lamb in the midst of the throne. There are few grander pictures in the Bible than St. John's conception of the heavenly Kingdom. It is like one of those drawings by Doré of the Paradise of Dante, in which there is circle within circle of wheeling angels. That is the kind of vision which St. John had of glory, as if from its utmost and dim verge it were filled with ranks and choirs; and as the circles drew nearer and nearer to the centre, they were composed of nobler and more glorious beings. In the very centre of that mighty confluence was a throne — it was the throne of the immortal and eternal God. And in the very centre of the throne, standing in front of it, there was a Lamb. And not any angel from distant rank or choir; not even the flaming cherubim or glowing seraphim—not these, but the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them. That means that the redeemed shall be fed not only gently, but by one who stands in the place of sovereign power. None can gainsay Him there; none can withstand Him; none can contest His access to green pastures. The Lamb who feeds them is in the midst of the throne—the sceptre of universal power is His now.

¶ All the universe and its forces are being administered for

purposes of redemption. The Lamb rules and He rules as the Lamb. How calming to feel this, to look up from the turmoil of this visible, flaring, and lying world—from the shows and shams and the tinted scene of the theatre; from all in life that startles and appals, to Him who sits above it all. From Him all things proceed, and to Him they return in circular flow. The shadows are all passing; the reality is behind. Nothing lasts; our trials are all hasting away to oblivion; let the wind rave as it will, we look at the Christ who abides. How small all our conflicts and ambitions seem to be, how transient and easily borne our sorrows, when we look up as John looked from the rock and the wild waters to the serene King, against whose changeless purpose all the waves of time and circumstance break in vain.[1]

2. The first words which St. John ever heard of Jesus were words that described Him as a Lamb. When he was a disciple of the Baptist, drinking in inspiration from that stern teacher, he had heard these words fall from the Baptist's lips, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The Apostle was a young man then, aflame with eager hope, and the words of the Baptist sank deep into his heart—so deep that through all his after years he loved to think of Jesus as the Lamb. What experiences St. John had had, and what a vast deal he had suffered when he came to write this Book of Revelation! Life and the world were different to him now from what they had been in the desert with the Baptist. Yet in Revelation some seven-and-twenty times John repeats the sweet expression "Lamb of God"—the first words he had ever heard of Christ. Christ in heaven to-day is the very Christ who walked by the banks of Jordan. Here it is the Lamb "in the midst of the throne." Here, in the glory, it is the Lamb slain, as in Isaiah it had been a lamb led to the slaughter. And we feel at once that not all the height of heaven, or all the inconceivable grandeurs of God's throne, have changed the nature or the love of Him who was pointed to beside the Jordan. Somehow, we are prone to think that our Saviour in the glory must be different from what He was long ago. We know that He is no longer rejected and despised, and we know that the body of His humiliation has been glorified, until insensibly we transfer these changes from His outward

[1] W. R. Nicoll, *The Lamb of God*, 50.

nature to His heart, as though death and resurrection had altered that. So do we conceive Christ as far away from us, separated from the beating of the human heart; glorious, yet not so full of tender brotherhood as in the days of Capernaum and Bethany. That error is combated by the vision of the Lamb in heaven. Purity, gentleness, and sacrifice are there. The wrath of the Lamb grows terrible just as we remember that that wrath is love rejected and despised. And in the last Judgment, when the Lamb shall be our judge, it will not be the majesty of God that will overwhelm us; it will be that we are face to face, at last, with the love and with the sacrifice of Christ.

¶ The wrath of the Lamb must be a wrath that can be justified. It is not, like so much of the anger of this world, unreasonable, hasty, and vindictive. It is the wrath of the Lamb, most gentle, most pitiful, most merciful, most long-suffering. Some have said that the wrath of the Lamb must be terrible because it is love turned to anger. There is no fire, it has been said, like the sheen of a dead affection; no enemy like one that has once been a friend. "To be wroth with one we love doth work like madness in the brain." But while this is true of men, we cannot affirm it in the same way about Christ, because this very excess of resentment and passion is often an infirmity and a sin. We may say that in Christ, as the flame of love is purer and stronger, so the flame of anger may be; but we cannot say that anything in His anger is passionate or vindictive. The truth pressed on us is that we shall have no defender when the Lamb ceases to plead for us. No one is so abundant in the resources of mercy and patience, and when His resources are exhausted, on whose shall we fall back?[1]

¶ Every fibre in Dean Church's frame quivered with righteous passion against the cynical indifference to cruelty and wrong which dominated London "Society" at the time of the Bulgarian agitation. He saw a moral judgment at work, sifting the people. Freedom, righteousness, the honour of England, the belief in the Divine government of the world, all were at stake in the momentous issue. He found himself beset on all sides by a political and social temper which was worldly, godless, immoral, and he flamed with prophetic wrath. The wrath of one so sensitive, so delicate, so appreciative, so balanced, so wise, was like nothing else that I have ever known. Its heat was so utterly devoid of mere personal interest; it was

[1] W. R. Nicoll, *The Lamb of God*, 115.

the heat of moral judgment, of sheer holiness—the heat of the Apocalypse.[1]

II.

The Lamb as Shepherd.

1. Christ is the Lamb, and He is the Shepherd—that suggests not only that the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ is the basis of all His work for us on earth and in heaven, but the very incongruity of making One who bears the same nature as the flock to be the Shepherd of the flock is part of the beauty of the metaphor. It is His humanity—His continual manhood—all through eternity and its glories, that makes Him the Shepherd of perfected souls. They follow Him because He is one of themselves, and He could not be the Shepherd unless He were the Lamb. All Christ's shepherding on earth and in heaven depends, as do all our hopes for heaven and earth, upon the fact of His sacrificial death. It is only because He is the "Lamb that was slain" that He is either the "Lamb in the midst of the throne," or the Shepherd of the flock. And we must make acquaintance with Him in the character of "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," before we can either follow in His footsteps as our Guide or be compassed by His protection as our Shepherd.

¶ This beautiful multitude in Heaven will be led by "the Lamb." Very meek must they be whom the Lamb shall lead: very pure, not to shame Him who is without blemish and without spot: very innocent, to be made one flock with Him.[2]

¶ Before the creation of the world we were destined to be His flock, and He was appointed to be our Shepherd. Even if mankind had not strayed away from the paths of righteousness, the relation of shepherd and flock would have existed. But having so strayed He took our earthly form upon Him to arrest our wanderings and to lead us back to the fold. Jesus is our Shepherd, not only during our earthly pilgrimage, but also through eternity. "He ever liveth" to be our loving Master and Friend. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." In the many mansions of the Father's

[1] H. Scott Holland, *Personal Studies*, 234.

[2] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 238.

house the flock of the redeemed shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more, neither shall the sun smite them, nor any heat; for their Good Shepherd, Jesus, who hath mercy on them, shall feed them and lead them to fountains of living waters, and God Himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.[1]

¶ Beyond the human region, out among those Eternities and Immensities where Carlyle loved to roam, there is that which loves and seeks. This is the very essence of Christian faith. The Good Shepherd seeketh the lost sheep until He finds it. He is found of those that sought Him not. Until the search is ended the silly sheep may flee before His footsteps in terror, even in hatred, for the bewildered hour. Yet it is He who gives all reality and beauty even to those things which we would fain choose instead of Him—He alone. The deep wisdom of the Cross knows that it is pain which gives its grand reality to love, so making it fit for Eternity, and that sacrifice is the ultimate secret of fulfilment. Truly those who lose their life for His sake shall find it. Not to have Him is to renounce the possibility of having anything: to have Him is to have all things added unto us.[2]

How fair and green yon blessed field
Beyond dark Jordan's flood reveal'd!
Eternal waters from the Rock
Fall ever for that happy flock;
The Shepherd Lamb with endless care
Among them moves and guides them there.

Yet we who tread the desert still
Share even now that Shepherd's skill;
The sands indeed around are spread,
The sun beats heavy overhead,
But where He leads us, there is traced
A long Oasis through the waste.

Our Elim still beside us moves,
With brimming wells and shadowing groves;
The mystic Rock is aye at hand
To cool and water all the land;
The Lord's green footsteps *now* create
Heaven's foretaste in our pilgrim state.

[1] A. F. Mamreov, *A Day with the Good Shepherd*, 84.
[2] J. Kelman, *Among Famous Books*, 322.

Then let us live as those who know
Eternal joys begun below;
Staff, shield, and sword, we need them yet,
For foes and traitors still beset;
But aye let harps and songs abound;
"We're marching through Emmanuel's ground."[1]

2. The ministry of the Good Shepherd does not close when He has brought back a lost sheep to the fold, and the wilderness is not the only scene of its activities. In the unknown land into which our friends pass, and from which no messages come back to us, redeemed souls still need His guiding hand. They are not left to explore for themselves the mysteries of the strange world into which they have gone, and to discover its riches. He tends His own there just as graciously as in this hard, bleak sphere of peril and distress. They have faded from our view, old and young alike, and we can do nothing more to help them. But they are still under the eye and the hand of the Good Shepherd. He who guided the outgoings of His first disciples amidst the hills of Galilee and by the lake shore, through the plains of Samaria and in the highlands of Judæa, will guide the quests of the celestial life. The hand that multiplied the bread on earth will minister the mystic manna. The holy feet that went before the disciples will lead into the pathways of the living fountains. The old pastoral fellowship is re-established. He will give of the best things of His Kingdom on high just as freely as He made the disciples share every blessing of His own lot upon earth. The life to come will be infinitely varied, and the Lord Himself will show the way into the mysteries of its manifold blessedness. "He shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life."

¶ The rendering "unto fountains of waters of life" is more literal than that of the A.V.; still more literally we might render, "unto life's water-springs"; the emphasis is strongly on the word "life." In chap. xxii. 1, the water of life is as a river "proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." In comparison with the passage in Isaiah ("even by the springs of water shall he guide them") the thought has taken a more distinctly spiritual meaning: the middle term will be found in the teaching of Jesus; cf. John iv. 14, "The water that I shall give him shall become

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *In the House of the Pilgrimage*, 13.

in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life"; also vii. 38.[1]

¶ The Lamb will tend His people as a shepherd tends his flock (the word translated "feed" in the A.V. has this force), and will lead them to the springs of the water of life. The Twenty-third Psalm rises at once to our minds. The Lord who was David's shepherd (Ps. xxiii. 2), who was the Good Shepherd who sought and brought home the lost for whom He died (Luke xv. 4; John x. 11), does not forget the shepherd's work in heaven. He who made His people to drink of the brook in the way (Ps. cx. 7), who gave to those who came to Him the water which alone would quench their thirst, leads them now to the springs of the living water, and makes them drink of the river of His pleasures (Ps. xxxvi. 8). Significantly enough the springs of this living water are in the throne itself. Ezekiel saw the stream issuing forth from the Temple (Ezek. xlviii. 1), but in the city where there is no temple we are carried to the very throne of God, to find the well-spring of every gladness. In this emblem of the water we have another allusion to the Feast of Tabernacles. Among the ceremonies observed at the feast was that of drawing water; the priest drew a vessel of water from the brook of Siloam, and poured it out in the temple-court by the altar of burnt offering, and the people sang the words, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Is. xii. 3). Here the Lamb, who is also the High Priest, leads His people to the springs of the water of life.[2]

3. Of old the Good Shepherd made His flock to lie down in green pastures; He led them beside the still waters. These were the far-off streams, but now they have reached the well-head of all; they have come to living waters of life; and more than waters, to fountains. What a pathetic and ennobling summary of life is the old Eastern saying, "In the morning, mountains: in the evening, fountains!" And here it is in its highest fulfilment. Think of these spirits as now far up in the heights of glory! They lie down and drink deep of the very innermost fountain, where life—God's life—pours itself, fresh and full, into their very being. This is more than even sonship, it is the life Divine that breathes and beats beneath the sonship. This is more than service, this makes the heart burn in sacrifice, and the lips break forth in song. This is more than subjection, this elevates not

[1] C. Anderson Scott. [2] W. B. Carpenter, *The Revelation*, 104.

only before but to the throne of God. It is life, fountain life, the well of life springing up in them from the Divine fountain into everlasting life. Now, indeed, they comprehend with all saints the length and the breadth, the depth and the height; now they know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, and are filled with all the fulness of God.

¶ Dr. Schaff's old friend Godet wrote to him in 1892 a loving letter of farewell, in which he said: "God has already blessed us both, and the 103rd Psalm should be our psalm. Farewell, my dear old faithful friend. Again let me repeat to you one of the last words of Tholuck. One of his old students was visiting him and recalled that he had once said that when one was old and feeble, one must put oneself into the arms of the Good Shepherd to be brought home by Him. Tholuck looked at him without seeming to understand, and then he spoke these words, 'Ein alter müder Mann, ein guter treuer Hirte' (An old tired man, a good faithful Shepherd). That which was true for our dear teacher is now true for us. Let us rest our tired heads and hearts, often bruised, upon the Good Shepherd. The nearer one comes to the end, the more one is inclined to look back to the beginning and that with a deep feeling of humble thanks. I have eighty years behind me; this is goodness enough, and each new day I regard as a *donum superadditum*. Happy are we who are able to look peacefully behind and ahead, thanks to the blood which flowed for us and the Holy Spirit who will keep us to the end and in the communion of our glorified Brother and Saviour."[1]

III.

God as Comforter.

1. The last touch in this picture sets forth the Eternal God as the Comforter of His saved people. "And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." Through all earthly vicissitudes He had been their light and salvation, illuminating their gloom, turning their mourning into joy, and appointing them beauty for ashes. It is an old relationship that He resumes and consummates. Not only is He the object of worship upon the throne; He comes nearer still to the redeemed multitude, healing all the smarts of earth, and dispersing the last memory of pain. The great tribula-

[1] D. S. Schaff, *The Life of Philip Schaff*, 448.

tion leaves no scar or tear-stain upon the ransomed universe. The description reaches completeness in this exquisite and comprehensive promise. We can imagine a man placed under sunlit skies, breathing the exhilarating air of a new-created world, looking forth upon domains of unshadowed beauty, secure against privation and distress, welcomed into rare and gladdening fellowships, and yet sighing at some plaintive memory of the past, or chilled by the uprising of a bygone trouble. But these final words of the text leave no room for such forebodings. In winning and gentle friendship, God comes to each spirit of the redeemed from among men, and sweetens every hidden spring of bitterness and distress. We may be tempted to think that there are tragic and haunting memories which will steal into the high and holy place. Some griefs are so vast and mysterious that they threaten to make us pensive amidst the angels. It is difficult to see how some distresses can be obliterated, for no finite ministry can conjure them into oblivion. But the things impossible to the uttermost human sympathy and gentleness are possible to God. When God puts His hand upon the fountain of mortal tears, the fountain is sealed up for ever.

¶ The eldest of the three [Ladies of Sorrow] is named *Mater Lachrymarum*, Our Lady of Tears. She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces. She stood in Rama, where a voice was heard of lamentation—Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted. She it was that stood in Bethlehem on the night when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of Innocents, and the little feet were stiffened for ever which, heard at times as they trotted along floors overhead, woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in heaven. Her eyes are sweet and subtle, wild and sleepy, by turns; oftentimes rising to the clouds, oftentimes challenging the heavens. She wears a diadem round her head. And I knew by childish memories that she could go abroad upon the winds, when she heard the sobbing of litanies, or the thundering of organs, and when she beheld the mustering of summer clouds. This Sister, the elder, it is that carries keys more than Papal at her girdle, which open every cottage and every palace. She, to my knowledge, sat all last summer by the bedside of the blind beggar, him that so often and so gladly I talked with, whose pious daughter, eight years old, with the sunny countenance, resisted the temptations of play and village mirth, to travel all day long on dusty

roads with her afflicted father. For this did God send her a great reward. In the spring-time of the year, and whilst yet her own spring was budding, He recalled her to Himself. But her blind father mourns for ever over *her*; still he dreams at midnight that the little guiding hand is locked within his own; and still he wakens to a darkness that is *now* within a second and a deeper darkness. This *Mater Lachrymarum* also has been sitting all this winter of 1844–45 within the bedchamber of the Czar, bringing before his eyes a daughter (not less pious) that vanished to God not less suddenly, and left behind her a darkness not less profound. By the power of the keys it is that Our Lady of Tears glides, a ghostly intruder, into the chambers of sleepless men, sleepless women, sleepless children, from Ganges to the Nile, from Nile to Mississippi. And her, because she is the first-born of her house, and has the widest empire, let us honour with the title of "Madonna."[1]

2. What need that God should wipe away the tears when the Lamb has led to the living waters? Would not joy follow as a matter of course? If our hunger and thirst have been taken away, if our eyes have already rested on the sparkling fountains, surely God need not interpose to dry our tears; will not Nature do that? No. One's first joy is not brought back by restoring one's first surroundings. Grief itself robs us of something; it breaks the elastic spring. The child cries after it has ceased to be hurt. The hurt has put it in the valley, and the painlessness cannot at once lift it to the mountain. Someone must put right the spring, must restore the capacity for joy. The fountains in vain will sparkle if the heart has lost its shining. And so, this one ray, the tenderest of the heavenly vision—one bar, the sweetest of the heavenly music—marks the close of the text. It reminds us of perhaps the noblest passage in Handel—the Dead March in "Saul." When the music surges free and escapes all gloom in the great burst of joy after the funeral wail, then at its highest there comes in a tremulous minor strain which makes the glorious vision of the swelling triumph more heroic and exultant as we see it through tears. Another touch could not be added to the vision; but it can be made more thrilling and pathetic by a hint of the "great tribulation" that is gone, by flashing it for a moment and unexpectedly through the dimming tears once so sad and familiar;

[1] De Quincey, *Suspiria De Profundis* (*Works*, xiii. 365).

and that touch is given in the words which close this vision, which, beginning with tribulation, ends with tears, but leaves the whole space between calm and undimmed. The mighty Hand that bore away their sins, and led them in royal majesty, touches them with more than a mother's yearning. "And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." Tribulation gone from their steps; sin washed out of their hearts; now all the fountains of their tears are dried up. Truly the right hand of the Lord hath done valiantly in its mighty deeds of salvation; but this, its last touch of ineffable pity, moves us to the uttermost with the tenderness as well as the omnipotence and infinitude of love Divine.

Meanwhile to us, as we look up to that vision, is given the sweet pain of noble tears, and we feel rising within us the longing desire of the Great Dreamer, who in his vision followed the pilgrims from the City of Destruction to the City of the New Jerusalem, till he saw them "go in at the gate. And after that they shut up the gates; which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them."

¶ A great sorrow after a time becomes idealized. It presses at first with overpowering weight, but gradually it rises till it becomes a thing of contemplation on which we can dwell with calmness, and which leaves a mellowing influence behind. One has seen the dew, bequeathed by the darkness, weigh down the flowers' heads, but sunlight relieves the pressure, dries up the tears, and leaves only their memory in refreshment and fragrance.[1]

¶ What will be the complete rest to which we are aspiring when all the history of the world is wound up and God is all in all! What retrospects of home repose, and wanderings here and there, of earthly histories wrought out and consummated! How can we conceive of a complete joy if those we love are not there with us? I dare hardly turn my eyes this way. It is like the beginning of an agony to think of Eternal separation; it seems as if it would fill Eternity with tears. What is that view of Truth that will wipe all tears away? What that consent to the Divine Rectitude which cannot permit a diminished joy even when the wicked are silent in darkness? I need help for such thoughts as these—God bring all we love safe within that circle of glory. God grant we may have no loves on earth that will not be everlasting.[2]

[1] John Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 125.
[2] *Letters of James Smetham*, 140.

¶ The summer of 1826 was, I believe, the hottest and driest in the nineteenth century. Almost no rain fell from May till August. I recollect the long-continued sultry haze over the mountains of Lorne, Loch Etive daily a sea of glass, the smoke of kelp-burning ascending from its rocky shores, and the sunsets reflecting the hills of Mull and Morven in purple and crimson and gold. I can picture a sultry Sunday in that year in the quaint, rudely furnished, crowded parish church, then beside the manse, and the welcome given to the sublime imagery of the Apocalypse in the words which formed the text: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat."[1]

> And now, all tears wiped off from every eye,
> They wander where the freshest pastures lie,
> Through all the nightless day of that unfading sky![2]

[1] A. Campbell Fraser, *Biographia Philosophica*, 17.

[2] Horatius Bonar.

The Kingdom of our Lord.

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THE KINGDOM OF OUR LORD.

The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.—Rev. xi. 15.

THE vision of the author of the Book of Revelation presents a sublime drama of the unfolding of the Divine idea in the world and its conflict with the secular spirit. It sets forth the play of spiritual forces and their victorious issue. What the Seer beheld was Christ triumphant in the whole sphere of human thought and feeling. By "the kingdom of the world" he did not mean merely the realms over which kings reigned. He meant the ruling ideas of the world—its dominant forces, social, intellectual, political. All these were, and are to be, brought under the dominion of Christian principles. All departments of life are to be consecrated and sanctified by the spirit of Jesus. The text suggests the vision of a world-empire, once dominated by an usurping power, which has now at length passed into the hands of its true Owner and Imperator.

¶ It is "the kingdom"—not, as in the Authorized Version, "the kingdoms"—"of the world," which has become Christ's possession. The contest is not for the kingdoms, the separate nationalities; the varying political systems might exist, as far as mere organization is concerned, under the rule of Christ; the contest is for the kingdom of the world. Satan was willing to surrender the kingdoms of the world to our Lord on condition of a homage which would have left him still in possession of the kingdom of the world. But now the close of the contest is the overthrow of the kingdom of evil, the establishment of the kingdom of good; that is, of God.[1]

¶ This is the future triumph-song of the Christian Church. We cannot rightly sing it yet; we can only join in its prelude. As sung by the inhabitants of heaven it is the fulfilment of a wondrous and long-continued prophecy; as heard by us it is the inspiration of all true Christian service. It is, even now, by

[1] W. B. Carpenter, *The Revelation*, 151.

anticipation, the song of the blessed over the earth, as it will be hereafter, by the complete realization, the song of the earth over itself. No false note quavers through its music. To the redeemed in glory it is the completion of a great joy; to the redeemed in heaven it is the embodiment of a living hope.[1]

I.

The Kingdom.

1. The text is the announcement of the time of the arrival of the restored Kingdom to which men had looked forward since the loss of Eden. Its burden is this: God's purposes have now become finished. The work of the Redeemer has been successful. This world, devil-conquered, has now become Christ-restored. The sceptre has been wrested from the hands of that spiritual tyrant who has cursed it with so much sin and misery. And now "the kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ"; henceforth a reverse history of it is to begin—holiness instead of sin, happiness instead of misery, life instead of death; and no further reversion is to be feared, for "He shall reign for ever and ever."

The text is a vision, but it is not visionary. It is a vision only in the sense that it unfolds to us things yet future. The Christian prophet here dips into the future farther than human eye can see, and sees the vision of the world, and all the wonder that shall be. And it is the certainty of that "shall be" that redeems it from unreality. It is a vision of the world—of this world; and it is a vision of something that will certainly be seen in it. God's truth is pledged to this; and it is as certain as anything that has been in the history of the past. Hence the historic form of the language—"the kingdom of this world"—not merely shall be, but is—"is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ." It is so put because there can be no contingency, no doubtfulness about it. It has been God's plan to bring about this issue from the beginning—from the first inception of His purposes of grace respecting the redemption of this world. And, as time has rolled on, all has been slowly tending to its final accomplish-

[1] W. Watson.

ment. All prophecy has sung of it; and it is only part of a series that has ever been fulfilling.

¶ The conception of the Kingdom of God on which Jesus based His gospel was determined for Him by contemporary Judaism; but in its essence it is fundamental to all religion. Amidst the imperfections of the present, men have ever looked forward to some glorious consummation, and have lived and worked in the faith of it. To the prophets of Israel it was the new age of righteousness—to the Greek thinkers, the world of pure intelligible forms—to Augustine and Dante, the holy theocratic state—to the practical thought of our own time, the renovated social order. Each successive age will frame to itself its own vision of the great fulfilment; but all the different ideals can find their place in that message of the Kingdom which was proclaimed by Jesus. He expressed it, for He could not do otherwise, in the language of His own time; but the aspiration which He cherished will ever find its response in the hearts of men. "Thy Kingdom come—thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

Jesus foretold the coming of that Kingdom, and transformed the dream of it into a living hope. In His own Person He was the Messiah of the Kingdom. The title to which He laid claim was inherited by Him from a bygone world of Jewish thought; but He filled it with a new and lasting significance by identifying it with Himself. He has taught us to see in Him the Anointed One—the chosen Leader of mankind, by whom God will bring in His Kingdom.[1]

2. The event concerning which the seventh angel of the Apocalypse "sounded," and which occasioned great voices of jubilation in heaven, is not an event which is happening in the region of heaven; it is an event which is to happen on this earth. This wonderful transference is to take place in this very world in which we are now living. Nor is the word "world" in either reading that word which, in the original, is sometimes confined to the Roman Empire, or to the habitable world; it is that world which embraces the whole of this earth, or the whole of the visible cosmos. It is this that is said to pass at this time into a great Theocracy, or, more definitely still, into a Christocracy. That rule under which the world has heretofore been is to pass away and it is to become, what it was not before, the Kingdom of the Christ of God.

[1] E. F. Scott, *The Kingdom and the Messiah*, 256.

This earth, which was the scene of the usurper's conquest, the scene of the Redeemer's conflict with him, the scene of the Redeemer's travail, toil, agony, shame, and death, the scene of all His Church's conflicts and sufferings, is yet to be the theatre of His triumphs. He is not to win in some ghostly region far away, and leave this world to the devil or to ashes. But here, in this tangible world, is He yet to triumph, and over the field of His sufferings is He yet to wield His sceptre. The prayer that has been going up from the Church for two millenniums shall yet receive its glorious answer: "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Christianity shall not, cannot, be worsted. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early."

¶ We pray day by day, "Thy kingdom come." Have we ever stayed to think what will be when God at last grants that prayer? We often speak of the ways in which we may promote God's Kingdom: by seeking His glory and obeying His will in our daily lives, or by aiding those machineries which are at work in the world for its improvement or evangelization. Have we ever thought what it will be when God's Kingdom is come? What will be left then of this life, of this world, which is now so much to all of us, which is now all in all to many? In other words, How much of our present lives is entirely holy and heavenly? how much can survive the wreck of earth, and be transferred into a world in which God is all? . . . At present we are familiarized by long use with many things which are not according to God's will; and few men live out their "threescore years and ten" without finding their sensibilities somewhat blunted, and their estimate of the sinfulness of sin robbed of something of its severity. How shall we ever learn to echo that doxology of the elders, "We thank thee, O Lord God Almighty, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and because thy kingdom is come"? What a change, what a wonderful change, is implied in the announcement, "Thy kingdom is come"! If we are ever to learn that song, "what manner of persons ought we to be now in all holy conversation and godliness!" Yes, that is the lesson for us. Let God's Kingdom come to us, to us personally; let it come now, that kingdom which is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost"; that "kingdom of God" which is "within"; in the secret heart that loves God, in the devoted life which does God service![1]

[1] C. J. Vaughan, *Lectures on the Revelation of St. John*, 280.

3. No doubt the battle is not yet over. And we are sometimes afraid of the issue. The reason is that our view of the battlefield is too narrow. Even in modern warfare the commanding brain sits far away from the conflict, surrounded with maps and messengers, to direct and order the shifting changes of conflict, where general victory is consistent with defeat in detail, and the general advance with a partial retirement. The seat of God's government is in heaven. He has no vicar upon earth who can act as a substitute. His reign over all is consistent with partial defeats and partial retirements; a victory is won here, an apparent defeat is suffered there.

The progress of improvement, intellectual and moral, individual and national, is like the flowing tide. A wave advances beyond the rest, and it falls back again: you would suppose that the sea was retreating; but the next wave pushes farther still, and still the succeeding one goes beyond that; so that by a gradual, and for some time imperceptible, but sure and irresistible progress, the mighty element bears down every obstruction, and, in due time, occupies its destined station. Even before the inadvertent spectator is aware, the soil and slime, and all unsightly and rugged objects, disappear, and the whole space is occupied by the beautiful and majestic main. Such, no doubt, will be the uncontrollable progress of amelioration, under the Divine government, till that auspicious era shall arrive which is marked in resplendent characters in the decrees of heaven, and to which the golden index of prophecy continually points, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," and the reign of truth, freedom, virtue, and happiness shall be universal and everlasting

Say not, the struggle nought availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.[1]

II.

The King.

1. The true Theocracy is reached when the kingdom of the world becomes the Kingdom of the Lord. The advance of that Kingdom of God is by the increasing recognition of the truth, the truth of God and the truth of humanity as in Christ, sin and evil passing away as the mind of Christ possesses the spirit of man.

We identify Christ with the Church. But the "Kingdom" and the "Church" are not opposing, but complementary, terms in their New Testament meaning. We have to restore to the Church the empire assigned to it by Christ, the empire that knows no frontier. The Church must not be simply an agency of the Kingdom, but must be completely identified with it. And let the Church stand for the Kingdom, let the Church stand for what Christ stands for, let the Church be identified with Christ's purpose and passion, want what He wants, yearn for what He yearns, the conquest of the world, of all the kingdoms of the world, let the Church consume with this passion, let the supremacies be supreme, and there will be an end of sectarian strife, denominational rivalries, and ecclesiastical competition, and the one Holy Catholic Church will stand for the complete realization of the Kingdom of God upon earth.

¶ A good many are asking such revolutionary questions even now [Is the Church of any use; were it not well that it perished that Christianity might the better thrive?], and it is foolish for Churchmen simply to be shocked and to characterize them as profane. The Church is only a means to an end; it is good only

[1] A. H. Clough.

so far as it is Christian. There is no merit or profit in mere ecclesiasticism. Whatever reveals the true Christ is of value and will live. Whatever hides Christ, be it pope, priest or presbyter, sacraments or ecclesiastical misrule, is pernicious, and must pass away; but we may hope that there will always be enough of Christ's spirit in the society which bears His name to keep it from becoming utterly savourless and to bring about such reforms as may be necessary to make it serve the end for which it was instituted. Should this hope be disappointed, then the visible Church, as we know it, must and will pass away, leaving the spirit of Christ free room to make a new experiment, under happier auspices, at self-realization. To be enthusiastic about the Church in its present condition is impossible; to hope for its future is not impossible, but if it were, there is no cause for despair. Christ will ever remain the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, and the kingdom of God will remain a kingdom that cannot be moved.[1]

2. We profess to believe, as Christians, in the reality of the Divine Kingdom. Faith makes us members of it, and brings us into it. We share in its strength and freedom because we own Christ as Lord and Saviour. Our place is therefore the index to our duty. We cannot be subjects of so vast a realm without at the same time retaining the consciousness of our responsibility to Him who has placed us where we are, and to those who are not where we are. This world of sin can never be changed into a world of holiness except through the changed histories of those who call themselves by Christ's name. The only limit, therefore, we can place on the range of the gospel of Christ is that which is offered by the final satisfaction of the human race. Christ declared Himself not the Saviour of a people or the Deliverer of any particular land, but the Son of Man, born for humanity, living and dying for them.

Christ as King must oust every usurper. The gospel comes into collision—it puts itself purposely in collision—with all opposing forces, lays down the most stringent regulations for human life and human peace. It lays down the most inspiring hopes for the human heart, and its very incredibilities are the things that are winning the credence of human minds everywhere. It is the standing miracle of history, and there is nothing that

[1] A. B. Bruce, *The Kingdom of God.*

more conclusively proves its Divineness than what we call its success, although the word success is not a word to be used in this connexion. No, we have not to think of success. Christ did not send forth successful men; He only sent forth witnesses. We have nothing whatever to do with the success of the gospel of Jesus Christ; we are merely to proclaim; we have merely to witness to the truth as it is in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have nothing to do with the establishment of the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ; all we have to do with is the proclamation of it.

¶ Max Müller, speaking as a scientific student of the world's religions, said in 1876, in Westminster Abbey: "Every Christian is, or ought to be, a missionary." Do we realize this? Do we believe it? Or is it not so, that we look upon the making Christ and His gospel known to all nations as something quite "outside the ordinary course of the service of God—a thing that some men may take up because they are interested in it," but which is by no means obligatory upon all Christians just because they are Christians?[1]

¶ We have so far only been playing at the work of winning the world for Christ. We have relied on a campaign of flying columns for the conquest of the world. The call which now rings in the ears of the Churches is a call summoning to a concerted world-wide campaign. The day of playing at this work is past. The day of self-sacrifice is come. What Christianity is summoned to prove is this: to establish its claim to wield the destinies of the world. Is it a living and a conquering energy—or a decadent and a spent force? In Abyssinia a degenerate Christian Church is yielding day by day converts to Islam. Is that to be the fate of Christianity as a whole? As one surveys the ancient races entrenched in their hoary faiths, and the vast territories still unoccupied and untouched by Christianity; as one sees the forces of ignorance and superstition and lust massed, presenting a solid front against the progress of the gospel; and as one looks at the Christian Churches and sees how few they are who feel the call to go forth and conquer the world, and how few are willing to make any sacrifice for the glory of their Lord—then there comes the hesitating doubt: can this task ever be accomplished? And the question rings in the ear, uncertain of its answer, "Can the world be won for Christ?" But the question throws us back on God. With Him the answer lies. Can the Church find now, as the Church ever found of old in the day of trial, such new

[1] R. H. M'Kim, *The Gospel in the Christian Year*, 327.

treasures of power and energy, and vitalizing force, such new revelations of the riches and the glory of God, that it will arise and go forth and conquer, not in its own strength, but in the irresistible might of God? Therein lies the hope of conquering the world for Jesus Christ. The summons that rings through Christendom is a summons calling the Christian host, if it would conquer, to fall back on God. To the world the task may seem impossible, and its performance a vain dream, but what are Christians in the world for but to achieve the impossible by the help of God![1]

3. No language can go beyond the terms in which the Lord sets forth His absolute power. "All authority," He says, "is given unto me in heaven and on earth." To feel the force of such a sentence, we must remember that He who spoke had been crucified not many days before amidst the mockery of His enemies and the despair of His followers. But now He lays open the eternal issues of that death. Not earth only but heaven is subject to His dominion. All created being has been brought under His sway—angels, and men, and nature. In Him whatever before was most widely separated has found a final unity. The power is *given* Him. It represents the love of the Father no less than the victory of the Son. It is the pledge of the triumph of the Father's will; and His will is the salvation of men.

¶ If Christians only knew the meaning of the words: "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing," then there would be in the Church a mighty, irresistible power which would sweep over every frontier, and possess every land in the name of Jesus Christ. They would realize that all the power of God was working through them, that all the forces of the universe were working for them, that the stars in their courses were fighting on their side, and that against the Church of God, glowing with His omnipotent Spirit, nothing could stand. It was in the power of the ever-present Lord, in the might of the Holy Spirit, that in the early days Christianity won its triumphs. There is no other way, and no other power, through which Christianity will win triumphs to-day. The conquering power will manifest itself when Christians again realize their personal obligation to Jesus Christ. A Christendom in which the followers of Christ are dead to the stirring of personal obligation, in which the mass of Christians

[1] Norman Maclean, *Can the World be Won for Christ?* 16.

view with indifferent eyes the enterprise of missions, in which only a small fraction of the Christian host take any thought of what the glory of Christ demands—such a Christendom will never win the world for Christ. . . . The work to which the Church is urgently called is to make the faith of Christ again live in the hearts and souls of men. Then will the power come which will win the world for Jesus Christ. Then will that spiritual power which once swept Westward, anon sweep Eastward, until every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.[1]

III.

The King's Reign.

1. It is well that the Church should realize, in a way she is far from doing now, that the ascended Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords; that He has established His Kingdom on the earth; that He claims dominion over the whole human race, which He has redeemed by His blood; that the increasing purpose which through the ages runs, the one far-off divine event towards which all things are moving, and to which the complicated influences of historical development are slowly leading the human race, is the establishment of the Kingdom of the King of Love and Truth in the hearts of men all over the world. Many a time Christianity has been tempted, and has yielded to the temptation, to lean on an arm of flesh, to grasp carnal weapons, instead of relying on spiritual weapons alone. The result has always been disastrous. Every such weapon has been found a boomerang. It is only by tenderness and love, by meekness and patience and sacrifice and martyrdom that its victories have been won, and these are its guarantee of the future. It is an inexhaustible source from which to obtain supplies. The indwelling spirit of its Master is the constant generative force to reproduce the conquering power; and it is bound to survive and triumph through its inherent power of an endless, an indissoluble, life.

¶ If striving with all your might to mend what is evil, near you and around, you would fain look for a day when some Judge of all the Earth shall wholly do right, and the little hills rejoice on every side; if, parting with the companions that have given

[1] Norman Maclean, *Can the World be Won for Christ?* 144.

you all the best joy you had on Earth, you desire ever to meet their eyes again and clasp their hands,—where eyes shall no more be dim, nor hands fail;—if, preparing yourselves to lie down beneath the grass in silence and loneliness, seeing no more beauty, and feeling no more gladness—you would care for the promise to you of a time when you should see God's light again, and know the things you have longed to know, and walk in the peace of everlasting Love—*then*, the Hope of these things to you is religion, the Substance of them in your life is Faith. And in the power of them, it is promised to us, that the kingdom of this world shall yet become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.[1]

2. In Tennyson's pathetic poem, *In the Children's Hospital*, a sceptic murmurs: "The good Lord Jesus has had His day," and the believing nurse makes the comment: "Had? has it come? It has only dawn'd. It will come by and by." "Only dawn'd?" Why is Christianity, after all these centuries, only beginning to be manifested? It is at least partly because of the apathy, the divisions, the evil lives of us who profess and call ourselves Christians; because we have wrangled about the secondary and the comparatively unimportant and have neglected the weightier matters of the law; because we have so left to those beyond the Church the duty of proclaiming and enforcing principles which our Lord and His Apostles put in the forefront of their teaching. We have narrowed the Kingdom of Christ, we have claimed too little for Him, we have forgotten that He has to do with the secular as well as with the spiritual, that He must be King of the nation as well as Head of the Church. But now, in the growing prominence of social questions, which so many fear as an evidence of the waning of religion, have we not an incentive to show that the social must be pervaded by the religious, that our duties to one another are no small part of the Kingdom of Christ? For all sorts and conditions of men, for masters and servants, for rulers and ruled, for employers and employed, is there not ever accumulating proof that only as they bear themselves towards each other in the spirit of the New Testament can there be true harmony and mutual respect; that only, in short, as the kingdom of this world becomes the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, will men in reality bear one another's burdens; that only as the

[1] Ruskin, *The Bible of Amiens*, § 60 (*Works*, xxxiii. 174).

Everlasting Gospel of the Everlasting Love prevails will all strife and contention, whether personal or political or ecclesiastical or national, come to an end; that only as men enter into the fellowship of that Son of Man who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many, will the glorious vision of old be fulfilled: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

¶ A few months ago the country was held in the icy grip of winter. The reign of frost was supreme; vegetation, river, lake, and even parts of the sea were slaves of this tyrant. The sun's rays seemed as helpless as a child's breath to soften the tyrant's heart or loosen his hand. A child, had he heard some prophet speak of the summer, the glory of whose reign is just commencing, might have doubted, so strong was the cold and so completely conquered was nature, that the prophet's vision would ever be realized. Leave out experience, and none would have believed. When this text was written, so impossible did the prediction seem, it appeared absurd. The reign of the kingdom of darkness seemed complete. The world was one great catacomb where religion, morality, education, liberty and love lay buried. To say that the kingdoms of evil would change and become the kingdom of Christ was to talk of the impossible. To all human calculation, as well might some dreamy Esquimau prophesy that the helpless sun's rays will at last change the Arctic regions to the warmth and luxury of the Tropics. It was the helpless kingdom of the dying Christ and Paul pitted against earthly kingdoms, whose power and permanence were typified by the "eternal" Roman Empire. But the icy heart of winter has softened, and its hand has loosened, and summer has come with its faithful retinue of warm sun and showers, of bud and blossom and of leaf and bird—a time of life and beauty and song. So has a change come to the world of man. Through all the centuries, Christ has been coming with His retinue of high thoughts, of true emotions, of pure purposes and unselfish deeds, of great trust and imperishable hope, and has laid the foundations of His kingdom of love and righteousness and liberty. The kingdom

of this world is becoming the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ.[1]

¶ Every one is familiar with the custom which prevails of the whole audience rising and standing when the Hallelujah Chorus of Handel's "Messiah" is sung. It originated in the spontaneous act of King George II. under the spell of the music when first he heard it. The king's tribute was no mere compliment to the composer; it was a solemn acknowledgment of Him of whom it sang. It was the reproduction in another way of what Handel himself felt when he composed its strains. How did he explain the writing of his masterpiece? "I did think I did see all heaven before me and the great God Himself." That is his own account of it. It was an inspiration. It was the majesty of the theme that evoked the music. It voices the climax of heavenly song, in the Book of the Revelation, the victory of the Lamb over the last great effort of His foes. When it broke on John's ear, he heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings saying, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." What has called out this shout of triumph? The powers of evil had joined issue with the forces of God, and Babylon is fallen, and "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." That was John's vision of what was coming. That was what made heaven ring with Hallelujahs. That is the Christian conviction; that is Faith's Certainty, the Christian's assured hope as to the Future.[2]

3. Christ is still among us, speaking to those who listen through the manifold discoveries of the age, guiding even our fierce and selfish conflicts so as to minister to His purpose. And we ourselves consciously or unconsciously are serving Him. He uses us if we do not bring ourselves to Him a willing sacrifice. We cannot doubt this; and we cannot fail to see what a different world it would be, if, still remaining faithful to our personal convictions, abandoning nothing of the truth which has been made known to us, yielding no fragment of the position which has been committed to our keeping, we could all agree in holding as a living fact the reality of Christ's universal Presence; in looking to Him in the execution of our designs, as using them for some larger end; in making Him the witness of our actions, as tributary to a counsel beyond our thoughts. Nothing less than this is the

[1] C. A. Vincent. [2] R. J. Drummond, *Faith's Certainties*, 401.

scope of His words: "I am with you all the days, unto the end of the world." I—perfect God and perfect Man, able to help and to sympathize to the uttermost—I am with you. The promise has never been revoked. It has been forgotten; it has been practically denied; but it stands written still to reveal the heaven which lies about us, the powers which are ready for our hands.

¶ We let living facts stiffen into doctrinal abstractions, until Truth itself begins to wear a cold and fictitious aspect; it is not in fact true *for us* until we have made it our own through needing it, and loving it. It is not through a merely intellectual recognition that the human spirit can give its Amen to the Yea of God. We see how firm a hold the Church of the Early and Middle Ages kept upon this great truth, the actual presence of Christ with His people; how this belief revealed and as it were transfigured itself in legends which superstition itself cannot rob of their undying significance. When St. Francis stoops down to kiss the leper's wound, and sees that his place has been taken by the Saviour; when St. Martin hears these words in his vision, "Behold, Martin, who hath clothed *me* with his cloak," we see that the Church to these men is not the mere tomb of Christ, but His warm and living body sending a pulsation through every member.[1]

¶ The religious temper of his mind shows itself in the meditations he recorded from time to time while at Tübingen, which abound in expressions of longing for closer communion with Christ. On the last evening of the year 1838 he thus unbosomed himself:—

"I am quite full of the blessed nearness of the Saviour which I have felt in these last days of Christmas week, and especially as I have listened to preaching. I have learned again that the most precious of all experiences is the experience of His presence. There are happy hours spent in the friendships of the world where we say one to the other "I am thine, thou art mine." But those who feel the secret presence of Christ know that these pass into the shadow before the experiences we have in His communion, when we rise, as on the wings of eagles, through prayer and faith to Him the highest of all beings, the beginning and the end and the moving centre of all things. Here, one has answer to his questionings; here, peace which passeth knowledge. Our faith and hope, how can they fail to be sources of blessing, since they look towards Christ, who is not a hard master, but the Redeemer, the Wonderful, the Prince of Peace!"[2]

[1] Dora Greenwell, *The Patience of Hope* (ed. 1894), 66.

[2] D. S. Schaff, *The Life of Philip Schaff*, 24.

Jesus, Fountain of my days,
  Well-spring of my heart's delight,
Brightness of my morning rays,
  Solace of my hours of night!
When I see Thee, I arise
To the hope of cloudless skies.

Oh, how weary were the years
  Ere Thy form to me was known!
Oh, how gloomy were the fears
  When I seemed to be alone!
I despaired the storm to brave
Till Thy footprints touched the wave.

But Thy presence on the deep
  Calmed the pulses of the sea,
And the waters sank to sleep
  In the rest of seeing Thee,
And my once rebellious will
Heard the mandate, "Peace, be still!"

Now Thy will and mine are one,
  Heart in heart, and hand in hand;
All the clouds have touched the sun,
  All the ships have reached the land;
For Thy love has said to me,
"No more night!" and "no more sea!"[1]

[1] G. Matheson, *Sacred Songs*, 115.

The Dead in Christ.

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The Dead in Christ.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them.—Rev. xiv. 13.

1. This is one of those rare enough verses in the Apocalypse which, amid the prevailing utterances full of woes and threatenings, of judgments and of terrors, fall with a quite peculiar softness and soothing upon our ears. Like the fragments of a tender melody which now and then is heard breaking through the stormful wailing notes of some piece of music, they are all the more heavenly because of the surrounding strife and stress of sound. Or, as when the sky is dark and the hills are in gloom, and the only patch of colour is the lurid red on the great mounting thunder-cloud, "rolled outward into space on thunder-edges," a gentle gleam escapes for a moment and lights up some height or rests in glory upon some distant slope, so does such a sudden burst of spiritual sunshine as this divinely tint the sombre landscape, and bring a feeling of more than earthly gladness and hope into our hearts.

2. If the Apostle John was, as is generally believed, the writer of the Book of Revelation, and if he was at Rome with St. Peter and saw the persecution of the first Christians by Nero, and escaped the slaughter, then the passage containing the text not only has the beauty of its long association with those who have died in our arms, and with the sorrow and sentiment of gracious death all over the world, but it also has a deep historical interest of its own. The writer had then seen at Rome the crowds of martyrs who day after day testified by strange and cruel deaths to the faith of Jesus. He may have watched their suffering from the rows of the great circus, the site of which we look on from the steps of St. Peter's. He may have heard with mingled wrath and pity of the paths of the palace of Cæsar lit at

night by human torches; he may have stood beneath the cross on which St. Peter died, and beside the scaffold where St. Paul suffered for his Master. Yet, looking back from his Eastern home on these terrible and woeful things, and expecting more of them before the Lord should come, he wrote in this triumphant strain: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them."

I.

The Blessed Dead.

1. This "voice from heaven" which St. John in Patmos heard is one of the great benedictions of the Bible, and may almost be said to give, in a single sentence, the whole New Testament teaching on the unseen life of Christ's redeemed. It is but one little corner of the curtain that is lifted, but it is enough. The dead, as well as the living, are in God's hand. We ask no more; we know no more; we pretend to know no more. The veil shall one day be drawn, and we shall know. It is sufficient for the present to be assured that the dead in Christ are for ever done with toil, unrest, weariness and pain, with hindrances to fellowship with one another as well as with Christ; that there are no more misunderstandings, no separations of feeling, no self-reproaches for sin, no need for repentance, no stirrings of remorse, such as even the best of them often had below; that they are "without fault before the throne of God," without fault because Christ whose likeness they wear is without fault; and that all the sin of the earlier life is so completely blotted out from the very memory that it is as though it had never been.

¶ We wonder at it, and wonder at ourselves to think we have passed through it all, and that we are here; friends, faces, scenes, that were everything to us, and they are gone with a widening sea between. That must have been the feeling of the man who said, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." It is at such a time that the thought of the living, unchanging Friend must come in if our own hearts are to live. I think, next to the desire for God Himself,

for an infinite Friend, it is the desire for our dead that presses us to the cry, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God,"—the living God who will not let the dearest and deepest things to which He has given life die for ever, and who has sent His Son into the world to lie down in our grave and rise again, that He may be the first-fruits of them that sleep. If we can clasp Him to our heart, it recovers all and more—the shadow of death is turned into the morning, and the dim, fading past changes into a blessed future. We may say even it makes them present. "Ye shall see greater things than these," heaven opens, and the angels of God ascend and descend on Him. May you and yours, my dear friend, have something of this view, and as your faith lifts its eye by that heavenly ladder, may the departed come down and be about you in your thoughts and feelings, may we not hope with a true though unseen presence?[1]

2. The text speaks not of the dead in general, but of "the dead which die in the Lord." Who are they? They who "die in the Lord" are in the Lord—united to Him by faith. Faith is the bond of union; by faith the believer dwells in Christ, while Christ dwells in him by His Spirit. He is one with Christ, and Christ is one with him. He is "in Christ." To die in the faith and fear of the Lord, to die in a state of reconciliation and peace with the Lord, all these are but aspects of one great principle, the principle of inner union with Christ Himself.

¶ Another sorrow fell on him in the illness and death of one who had been, by her Christian character and her good works, a strength to the congregation. In a letter to Mr. David Cowan, Dr. Robertson writes from Irvine toward the end of August 1875:

"Our loving and beloved Mrs. Brown is still with us, but 'wearying, wearying,' as she said to-night, 'to be home.' How sublimely simple her faith is—without all fear or doubt—not trusting to swim ashore on any raft of doctrine, or system of orthodoxy, or even on separate Scripture texts and promises, 'boards and broken pieces of the ship,' still less, least of all, not at all on any works or merits of her own, but clinging to the hand of 'Jesus only,' who has come to her over the waters of death, and bids her come to Him—to Him who gives the weary rest. 'O Lamb of God, I come.' She cannot be long outside the harbour, one would think. May she have an abundant entrance. As I left the house to-night late in the darkness under the trees,

[1] *Letters of the Rev. John Ker*, 335.

it was not difficult to imagine that the shining ones were waiting about the doors."[1]

3. To "die in the Lord"—the lips murmuring His name, the eyes of the heart fixed upon His cross, the spirit commending itself to Him even as He commended His Spirit to the Father, while it sinks beneath the weight of the falling tabernacle of clay —of all the exercises of faith this commonly is found to be the least difficult for those who have lived the life of faith on the Son of God.

¶ As Laurence Oliphant lay dying, the dear and sacred name of Christ was ever on his tongue. A day or two before his death he called his faithful nurse early in the morning, probably in that rising of the energies which comes with the brightness of the day, and told her that he was "unspeakably happy." "Christ has touched me. He has held me in His arms. I am changed—He has changed me. Never again can I be the same, for His power has cleansed me; I am a new man." "Then he looked at me yearningly," she adds, "and said, 'Do you understand?'" As he lay there dozing, smiling, with the look of this exultation never leaving his face through the long last hours that followed, he was heard to hum and sing in snatches the hymn, "Safe in the arms of Jesus." Who knows where he had learnt it?—perhaps at some American "revival" or camp meeting, where the keen observer would catch up unawares and with a smile at himself the homely strain, which thus floated back to the memory of the dying the hymn of the humblest believer, the simplest certainty of a faith unencumbered with any new lights. . . . "His last conscious moment on Sunday," adds his wife, "was one of hope and effort lifewards." The actual end was complete and perfect peace. "He passed away as into a tranquil sleep, and woke four hours after in another world, or rather under another form, without having tasted death either physically or spiritually." Thus this extraordinary, varied, and noble life came to an end.[2]

4. To die in the Lord is to pass on and up to live with Him in the higher sphere, to live with Him there as we have lived with Him here, only no longer brokenly, imperfectly, fitfully, by reason of manifold infirmities, as here, but in perfect communion with Him who is all-perfect, seeing Him as He is and being like Him.

[1] James Brown, *Life of William B. Robertson*, 284.

[2] Mrs. Oliphant, *Memoir of the Life of Laurence Oliphant* (ed. 1892), 404.

To die in the Lord is not to cease to live, but to begin to live, as by a new birth, a new and fuller life, and that for ever and ever, in a new and better world, to rise into another and higher region, freed from all the encumbrances of this, a region of intense, conscious, joyous vitality; a region of intelligent, responsible, glorious activity, in which nothing that makes the dignity, the grandeur, of the burden of life is laid down, but only the pain.

The soul expands, freed from the baffling barriers of earth; expands to pursue the infinite glory and beauty of God. That is the depth of the blessedness of the dead. Nor need we fear, as some have feared, that in this great development the dead will so excel us that they will lose touch with us, or forget us in their larger life. They cannot, and will not, because the foundation of all their soul's expansion is love. Moreover, God loves, and though He excels infinitely His children, yet in love's communion we reach Him and abide in Him. And if we, so far behind Him, can live with Him like a child, we can also live with those we have loved, even were they a thousand worlds beyond us in all things else but love. Nor is this close communion through love between us and them the least part of their blessedness. And we too, even when our natural grief for their departure is deepest—we too, in belief in the blessedness of those we love, feel blessedness slide into our soul. To believe that they are radiant with joy and life, yet unforgetful of our love, is so Divine a comfort that, even when we stretch out our arms in vain, we thank God that we are not left alone. For spirit can touch spirit, though the eye sees not and the ear hears not. We cry, "Blessed are the dead, and I, too, with them, am happy with their happiness." That is a deep consolation, and if we cherish it, it deepens. Our dead are blest in love, and we, in their love, are blest.

¶ I believe very few of us think enough of the dead. Fear of false teaching about invocation of saints, and prayers for souls in purgatory, has made us Protestants almost forget what God has really told us about the dead. Surely the nearer we are drawn to Christ, the closer is drawn the tie by which living and departed are knit together. That is why I love to tell the mourners who are just feeling the great blank in their home circle that God never meant it to be a blank. I love to say, "that loved husband, or wife, or parent, or child is resting in the Blessed Presence of God. You are summoned to the same Presence; there

is but a veil between. The one family is never broken, though God has called some of them to rest in another room."[1]

¶ Mrs. Carlyle had again written to Mazzini, and again received honourable and gentle counsel. On July 15 he wrote to her:

"Yes! Sad as death; but not basely sad. . . . You believe in God; don't you think, after all, that this is nothing but an ephemeral trial, and that He will shelter you to your journey's end under the wide wing of His paternal love? You had, have, though invisible to the eyes of the body, your mother, your father, too. Can't you commune with them? I know that a single moment of true fervent love for them will do more for you than all my talking! Were they now what you call living, would you not fly to them, hide your head in their bosom and be comforted, and feel that you owe to them to be strong—that they may never feel ashamed of their own Jane? Why, can you think them to be *dead*, gone for ever, their loving immortal soul annihilated? Can you think that this vanishing for a time has made you less responsible to them? *Can you, in a word, love them less because they are far from sight?* I have often thought that the arrangement by which loved and loving beings are to pass through death is nothing but the last experiment appointed by God to human love; and often, as you know from me, I have felt that a moment of true soul-communing with my dead friend was opening a source of strength for me unhoped for, down here."[2]

II.

The Rest of the Blessed Dead.

The Spirit, in the mind of the Seer, responds to the Voice from above him, "Yea, they are blessed, to rest (as they shall) from their labours."

1. Let us get this point quite clearly established from the Word of God, that those who depart this life in the Lord are in a state of bliss and rest. It is but an expansion of this truth when we are told that they shall "hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." God Himself wipes all tears from their eyes; and they wait calmly in

[1] Aubrey L. Moore, *God is Love*, 214.
[2] Mrs. A. Ireland, *Life of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, 187.

that peaceful world and enjoy the rest, the Sabbath, that remaineth for the people of God. They are in God's presence, and therefore they are blessed. They are in God's safe keeping, and therefore they are at rest. Rest from the toils of life, from the cares of life, from the griefs of life, to all those who have known them, is blessed indeed. There is no more naturally true or beautiful way of announcing a good man's death than the old-fashioned phrase, "He is at rest."

¶ Emerson says that we carry the pledge of the continuance of our being in our own breast. Browning says that because there is so much wanting in this life, therefore there must be another life to supply the defect. . . . There is, however, another aspect of the future of which he is enamoured, and which he would fain portray, namely, that of cessation from the toils of earth. Hence, in the following verses [from *Old Pictures in Florence*] both phases are put before us side by side:

There's a fancy some lean to and others hate—
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins:
Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And, through earth and its noise, what is heaven's serene,—
When our faith in the same has stood the test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God:
And I have had troubles enough, for one.

But are these two views entirely inharmonious or incongruous? Are they mutually exclusive? May there not be a sense in which the living dead "rest from their *labours*"—the excessive and exhausting efforts of earth—while "their *works* follow with them," to be continued and perfected in that other sphere? But, whether that be so or not, what the poet in either case would have us see is that the future is a continuation of the present—on a higher level, in an ampler air, and surely with less to fetter or restrain.[1]

[1] J. Flew, *Studies in Browning*, 228.

2. The text speaks of one particular kind of rest—viz., a rest from labours; not from work, not from occupation, for be it remembered that man is endowed with an endless capacity for work. Heaven is not the rest of idleness; heaven is not the elysium of the drone and the sluggard. It is not rest from activity, rest from employment, that the dead in Christ enter upon, but a rest from toiling, wearying, disappointing, useless, harassing, painful labours. The Greek word for "labours" (*κόποι*) which is used in the text has invariably the sense of trying and distressing labours, exertions which, whether effectual or not, involve a painful strain, efforts often baffled, ever exhausting, ever reminding us of the condition into which man falls when he deliberately sets his own will against God's will; when therefore, instead of working in harmony with the eternal principles by which the universe is administered, he works more or less in antagonism to them, or in ignorance of their bearings. Looking at this point more closely, we feel that all the labours connected with our existence in the world of time and sense involve weariness, are liable to failure; at the best they are mixed up with much that we would gladly be rid of; and a very large portion of them is altogether futile, directed to wrong ends, issuing in results utterly opposed to our own wishes and intents. Hence the very common feeling, which at times creeps over us all, that it is well all such labour should come to an end; that the weary turmoil and struggle should cease; that rest, even at the cost of unconsciousness, is in itself a good; and could we but be secure that, together with this mortal coil, we shook off all responsibility for the past, and all possibility of recurrence of old struggles and trials, we might, perhaps, often be content to lay down our worn-out bodies for ever in the quiet grave.

¶ In a certain lake in Munster, it is said, there were two islands; into the first death could never enter, but age and sickness, and the weariness of life and the paroxysms of fearful suffering were all known there, and they did their work till the inhabitants, tired of their immortality, learned to look upon the opposite island as upon a haven of repose. They launched their barks upon its gloomy waters; they touched its shore, and they were at rest.[1]

¶ Of all hand work whatsoever, necessary for the maintenance

[1] W. E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals*, i. 203.

of life, those old words, "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread," indicate that the inherent nature of it is one of calamity; and that the ground, cursed for our sake, casts also some shadow of degradation into our contest with its thorn and its thistle: so that all nations have held their days honourable, or "holy," and constituted them "holydays," or "holidays," by making them days of rest; and the promise, which, among all our distant hopes, seems to cast the chief brightness over death, is that blessing of the dead who die in the Lord, that "they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."[1]

III.

The Works of the Blessed Dead.

1. Some would take "Their works follow with them," to mean that the reward of past works goes with the Christian into paradise. True indeed it is, in a very practical sense, that the peace and blessedness are rewards. But a work is one thing, and its reward is another; and without good reason we should not assume that they are identified by the language of Scripture. Others, again, would have it that the memory of past works is meant—an explanation open not only to the same objection, but to the far more formidable one that it would seem to represent the soul of the Christian as dwelling for ever with complacency on the thought of his own merits. But if the memory or the reward of works is not meant, at least chiefly or primarily, we are led on to a view that the works mean the living acts, the deeds which characterize the faithful servant of God as such, the results and proofs of the inner life on earth; that on his departure hence the man, the conscious man, bears with him those faculties and is permitted and enabled to do those works, in such form and such degree as may be consistent with his new condition. The works themselves, the energies and the results, go with him. He is not therefore, as some would tell us, in a state of dim unconsciousness, nor merely in a state of ecstatic trance, visited by gleams of heavenly splendour, or visions of a more glorious hereafter; he is in a state of action, doing works which differ from his works in this life mainly in that the element of struggle, of painful effort,

[1] Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive*, § 36 (*Works*, xviii. 418).

of an all but perpetual sense of failure and disappointment, is withdrawn, and replaced by a sabbatic rest—a rest not of idleness or vacuity, but of unbroken, untroubled action.

¶ It is curious that in the service for the Burial of the Dead in the Book of Common Prayer this verse ends with "they rest from their labours"; the words "and their works do follow them" are omitted. In the earlier days, in which the Prayer Book was arranged, men thought of death chiefly, if not entirely, as the great rest-giver. But the omission of the last clause, "and their works do follow them," destroys entirely the sense of the Heavenly Voice. Its very purpose was to assure men, not that the departed had passed into a long deep sleep, or that they would sit and sing themselves away to everlasting bliss, but that whilst death would give them rest from labour—from the strain and stress always more or less associated with earthly effort—it would not be the rest of sleep, of unconsciousness, or even of inaction, but the rest of work from which the sense of labour had departed.[1]

2. Activity is the law of our being. Powers unused gradually wither and at last perish. Use leads to increase and development. Disuse means in the end paralysis and loss. So far as we can judge, the mind is always at work. Even sleep, which seems like inaction, is not so in reality. In sleep the mind is active, only under conditions by which it is recuperated for the work of what we call its waking moments. Save where disease has stopped the wheels of the mind, it is ever active. Incessant activity is the law of life in the Divine Being Himself. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said Christ, and within narrower limits that seems to be the law of the creatures made in His image. If, therefore, life be continued beyond death, our works must follow with us. To say that the soul will exist is only to say that it must be active.

¶ My belief in the immortality of the soul springs from the idea of activity: for when I persevere to the end in a course of restless activity, I have a sort of guarantee from Nature that when the present form of my existence proves itself inadequate for the energising of my spirit, she will provide another form more appropriate.[2]

3. The works—what they are and what they have done for

[1] W. Garrett Horder, *The Other-World*, 60. [2] Goethe.

the man—follow as the shadow follows the man, the one thing inseparable from the other, when the sun is in the sky. Beautifully has it been said that the good works of Christians do not go before them to open heaven; but they must follow after, to make it a place of blessedness. The Psalmist says of the rich man, "When he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him." Not so with the man who is rich toward God. Character goes with us into the other world. Many work on materials that cannot follow them to eternity. The artist works for months on the canvas: he dies, and leaves the portrait behind him. The sculptor works on the marble for years: he dies, and leaves the sculpture behind. But the good man works on a material that will bear transferring to the other world. He draws beautiful lines—draws them upon his own soul, upon himself. He has sought the best material to work on, material that will last when the rocks melt. And his work in others will remain; it is cut deep enough, so that it shall be visible in the judgment, and can be read at the opening of the books.

¶ It is only in death that a man enters into full possession and use of what he produced within himself. What mental treasures he gathered in, all his life, what fills his memory, what pervades his feelings, what his mind and fancy created, is to remain his property for ever.[1]

¶ For the great sympathy was his—that love of the neighbour which is thrown like a mantle over the shoulders of some men, making them different from their fellows, securing to them that love of great and small, which, perchance, follows some, where they are dead, to that place where a human testimony may not be all in vain.[2]

¶ I must be permitted to give the following fragment from *The Book of the Sparkling Stone*. It is strangely beautiful:—

"Understand, now, that this is the mode of progress; in our going towards God, we ought to carry our being and all our works before us, as an eternal offering to God; and in presence of God we shall surrender ourselves and all our works, and dying in love, we shall pass beyond all creation into the super-essential kingdom of God. There we shall possess God in an eternal death to ourselves. And this is why the Spirit of God says in the book

[1] G. T. Fechner, *On Life After Death*, 55.
[2] H. S. Merriman, *The Sowers*, chap. xxiv.

of the Apocalypse, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.' Rightly indeed does He call them the blessed dead, for they remain continually dead to themselves and immersed beyond their own nature in the gladdening unity of God. And they die ever newly in love, by the attracting refreshment of that same unity. Furthermore, the divine Spirit saith, 'They shall rest from their labours, and their works shall follow them.' In this finite existence, where we are born of God into a spiritual and virtuous life, we carry our works before us as an offering to God; but in that unconditioned life, where we die anew in God, into a life of everlasting blessedness, our good works follow us, for they are one life with us."[1]

IV.

The New Era.

1. The words "from henceforth" form a difficulty; the reason for their introduction is to be found in the state of trouble which the previous verses of this chapter describe: the righteous are happy in being taken away from the evil to come. Or may it be that the words are designed to console the mourners in an age when dark unbelief robs them of the sweet resurrection trust, and writes over its graves, "Farewell for ever"? If the climax of world-power should be bitter scorn of the idea of a life to come, and complacent satisfaction with a portion in this world, then words of faith, proclaiming that the dead are happy and restful, and that their work is not in vain in the Lord, may find new force to sustain a fainting courage or a wavering trust.

¶ Ἀπ' ἄρτι, "from this time forth" (John xiii. 19, xiv. 7), must be connected, as its position shows, not with μακάριοι ("blessed"), but with οἱ ἀποθνήσκοντες ("which die"); nothing is said with regard to the past, the purpose of the revelation being to bring comfort to those who in the coming persecutions would need a strong consolation. It is a message in the first instance for a particular age, and referred to those who were to be called to suffer for their faith. Yet in view of the quite general terms in which it is couched, the later Church has felt herself at liberty to use it for the comfort of her mourners.[2]

[1] M. Maeterlinck, *Ruysbroeck and the Mystics*, 84.
[2] H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 187.

2. The state of good men who died before the coming of Christ appears to be always spoken of in the Old Testament as one of true, but very imperfect, blessedness; a period, not indeed of unconsciousness, but of dim expectation. It was scarcely looked forward to with joy by those who trusted confidently in the power and love of God. At the best they would be but "prisoners of hope" still, waiting for their appointed change—for the morning which, after an unknown length of night, would usher in the day of restoration. But when Christ came, when He had accomplished His work, when the blood was shed which atoned for all repented guilt, when His body had hallowed the grave, when His Spirit had burst the bars of the pit and preached to the spirits in Hades, a mighty change was effected—the prison became a palace. The future restoration, though not as yet effected, was anticipated; and while all the great spirits of old, who in darkness and trembling had passed into the shadow of death, were filled with a new joy, henceforth all who departed this life united to Jesus entered at once into a state of conscious blessedness, knowing, like St. Paul, that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord —present with Him in no dim visionary region, but present in paradise. "To this end Christ died, and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living." Since His resurrection, the dead are placed under Christ's lordship just as much as the living; therefore "from henceforth," after Christ's resurrection, those who die in the Lord are blessed, inasmuch as He will be the Lord of their destiny, and will be their security that it shall be one of "glory, and honour and immortality."

¶ Union with Christ finds its consummation in the heavenly destiny which it opens up before the believer. However we may speculate on the mysterious problems of the future, in this respect, at least, the Christian can feel no misgiving. By death Jesus escaped from the power of death and can die no more. So those who are one with Him participate in His deathless life. They cannot be less immortal than He is. His existence and theirs are twined together at the roots. Their life is hid with Him in God, but the secret forces which are withdrawn from the gaze of men will be revealed when they enter into possession of their glorious inheritance. It is with no tawdry splendours that we would imagine it bedecked. But all for which the heart most hungers, all to which the pure spirit most aspires, the satisfaction of love's

longing, the attainment of the loftiest ideals—these are the saints inheritance awaiting them in the realm of light.[1]

¶ The Book of Revelation casts the gleam of final victory in the future over many troubled scenes, always becoming clearer till all things are made new, and the material and spiritual, body and soul, earth and heaven, are reconciled. There is a divorce of these now, and death is the expression of it. The resurrection is the expression and consummation of reconcilement. God, who is the Creator of the material and spiritual—the Former of bodies, Father of spirits—has united them to each other in Him, and both to Himself in close eternal union. Is not this credible, probable, true, because godlike and grand,—an end to the universe worthy of our highest thinking and of its Author? This reconcilement of the material and spiritual in Christ is not merely a prophecy and pledge of the end but the means of it. "I am the Resurrection and the Life." All flows from this as streams from a fountain, light from a sun, life from God, for He is constituted the Head of the regenerated universe.[2]

¶ Dr. Young of Kelly (the famous chemist who was first to discover paraffin oil in shale) died on 13th May, 1883. On the Sunday following his funeral, Dr. Robertson preached at the evening service in Skelmorlie United Presbyterian Church, Dr. Goold of Edinburgh preaching in the forenoon. Mr. Boyd, the minister of the church, writes:

"In the course of his sermon Dr. Goold insisted strongly that the doctrine of immortality is taught in the Old Testament, and quoted a number of passages in support of his position. Dr. Robertson had arranged to preach in the evening from the text, 'Christ hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel,' and the psalms, hymns, and anthem had been chosen with this text in view. But after the forenoon service he came to me in anxiety and said, 'I must change my subject. If I preach the sermon I intended, Dr. Goold will think I am controverting his teaching.' All afternoon he was restless, evidently thinking over other sermons, but unable to fix on one. When the hour of evening service had come, he told me that he was still undecided. I replied, 'Keep to your subject; the choir cannot now change the hymns.' He consented to do so. It was evident that he had taken the position that immortality was not clearly taught in the Old Testament. With great tact he succeeded in avoiding the appearance of contradiction between him and the morning preacher, by saying in well-chosen words, which I cannot reproduce, some-

[1] A. S. Peake, *Christianity: Its Nature and Its Truth*, 297.
[2] John Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 171.

thing to this effect:—'Doubtless there are references to the doctrine of immortality in the Old Testament, as was so well put before you in the forenoon. But just as he whose death we are this day remembering with sorrow, found embedded in the caverns of the earth the dark substance by which he has illuminated the homes of rich and poor in many lands, so did Christ bring to light the doctrine of a future life. The shale was in the earth long before, but it was Dr. Young who revealed its illuminating power. Even so the doctrine of immortality, embedded in Old Testament passages, was practically unrevealed until He came who brought life and immortality to light.'

"I can give you no idea of the beautiful touches by which Dr. Robertson wrought out the thought I have only indicated; but so skilfully was it done that I think no one in the church ever dreamt of anything but completest harmony between the two preachers."[1]

[1] James Brown, *Life of William B. Robertson*, 428.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

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The Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. —Rev. xix. 9.

1. With the beginning of this chapter we enter upon the fifth great section of the Apocalypse, which extends to chap. xx. 6. The object of the section is to bring before us the triumph and rest of the faithful disciples of Jesus after their conflict is over. They have had to contend alike with the world and with the degenerate Church. They have been separated from both; and both have fallen. There is no more struggle for them now. The first notice of this happy state is presented in the song of thanksgiving over the destruction of Babylon, sung by the heavenly hosts and by the redeemed from among men.

The song is new, celebrating, not merely judgment on foes, but the full taking possession of His Kingdom by the Lord. Up to this time the actual marriage of the Redeemer to His people has not taken place. The two parties have only been betrothed to one another. At length the hour has come when the marriage shall be completed, the Lord Himself being manifested in glory and His bride along with Him. The Lamb is come to claim His bride, and "his wife hath made herself ready." Through storm and calm, through sorrow and joy, through darkness and light, she has waited for Him, crying ever and again, "Come quickly." At last He comes, and the marriage and the marriage supper are to take place.

2. Such is the moment that has now arrived, and the bride is ready for it. Her raiment is worthy of our notice. It is "fine linen, bright and pure"; and then it is immediately added "for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." These acts are not the imputed righteousness of Christ, although only in Christ are the acts performed. They express the moral and religious con-

dition of those who constitute the bride. No outward righteousness alone, with which we might be clothed as with a garment, is a sufficient preparation for future blessedness. An inward change is necessary, a personal and spiritual meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Thus "made ready," the bride now enters with the Bridegroom to the marriage feast; and, as the whole of her future rises before the view of the heavenly visitant who converses with the Seer, he says to him, "Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb." Once before, St. John had heard a similar, perhaps the same, Voice from heaven, saying, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." Then we believed; now we see. The clouds are dispelled; the veil is rent asunder; we enter into the palace of the great King. There is music, and festivity, and joy. There is neither sin nor sorrow, no privilege abused, no cloud upon any countenance, no burden upon any heart, no shadow from the future to darken the rapture of the present. Here is life, and life abundantly; the peace that passeth understanding; the joy unspeakable and glorified; the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading.

¶ "The Marriage of the Lamb" is a subject that can easily be vulgarized. It can be vulgarized for the same reason that the finest poems make the finest parodies. The higher you climb the deeper you fall. The subject is one of profound delicacy. Let us put the shoes from off our feet, for the place where we tread is holy ground.[1]

I.

The Marriage.

1. For the first time in the Apocalypse we read here of the marriage of the Lamb; and for the first time, although the general idea of supping with the Lord had been once alluded to, we read of the marriage supper. The figure indeed is far from being new. The writers both of the Old and of the New Testament use it with remarkable frequency. But no sacred writer appears to have felt more the power and beauty of the

[1] R. Waddell, *Behold the Lamb of God!* 262.

similitude than St. John. In the first miracle which he records, and in which he sees the whole glory of the New Testament dispensation mirrored forth, He who changed the water into wine is the Bridegroom of His Church; and, when the Baptist passes out of view, in the presence of Him for whom he had prepared the way, he records the swan-like song in which the great prophet terminated his mission in order that another and a higher than himself might have sole possession of the field: "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."

2. Now, what is the significance of this figure of the marriage relation between God and man which we find running all down revelation? It is not difficult to get hold of the central idea of it. What is marriage? It is the coming together of two lives in the deepest possible unity. It is the surrender of separate individuality and the mingling of each in a common stream. This is the ideal marriage. When we turn to the Word of God, and ask what marriage is, we find this idea of the unity of two lives expressed in the strongest possible terms. In marriage, in the ideal marriage, the two become one flesh. It does not rest on a civil contract like a business partnership. It rests on a mysterious change affecting the very substance of their body and blending two lives into a physical and spiritual oneness. The man and woman who love one another delight in all that is or seems to be most beautiful and good. It is even a kind of joy to know each other's troubles and to bear each other's faults. They find comfort and hope and strength in their mutual affections. Their very trials bring them closer. They learn to suppress self, to think how they can do and be the very best for each other. That is the ideal, and in many marriages it is realized.

3. Marriage in this ideal sense is used in the New Testament as a symbol of Christ and His relation to the Church. While St. Paul is dictating these wonderful words in the Epistle to

the Ephesians which declare the mysterious unity of life that marriage creates, "I think," says Dr. Dale, "I see a look of dreamy abstraction come over his face, showing that his thoughts have passed from earthly to heavenly things. He is in the presence of the transcendent unity between Christ and His redeemed. He is thinking of how Christ forsook all things that He might make us for ever one with Himself, that our earthly life might become His, His heavenly life ours. Forgetting for the moment that he was writing about marriage, he exclaims, 'The mystery, the secret of the unity of Christ and His people, the Divine purpose which from all ages had been hid in God, but was now revealed. The mystery is great.'" This is the groundwork of earthly marriage. This is the background from which its light and lifting come. This is what redeems it, and purifies it, and exalts it. It is meant to lead up to, and lose itself in, and be fulfilled by, the Divine eternal life of Christ. It is an image, a shadow, a symbol, of that.

¶ The spiritual union of Christ and His Church, though it is perfect in the Divine intention from the first, is in fact only consummated at the point where the Church is freed from the imperfection of sin and has become the stainless counterpart of Christ Himself. The love of Christ—the removal of obstacles to His love by atoning sacrifice—the act of spiritual purification —the gradual sanctification—the consummated union in glory: these are the moments of the Divine process of redemption, viewed from the side of Christ, which St. Paul specifies.[1]

¶ Let faith ring these bells of heaven for our joy. Married to Christ. Himself the measure of our responsibilities; Himself the fulness of our capabilities; Himself the possessor of our hearts' affections; Himself the security of our hopes; Himself the well-spring of our fruitfulness; Himself the law of our hearts, our glory, and our crown. Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.[2]

4. And now we are able to understand what is meant by the marriage of the Lamb. It is the final and perfect blending in one unity of the life of Christ and His people. Just as in an earthly union the two become one flesh, so with the great spiritual union Christ and His redeemed are brought together. They are brought

[1] C. Gore, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, 219.
[2] Marcus Rainsford, *Lectures on Romans vii.*, 28.

together not in place, but in character. They are brought together completely. The Divine and the human cease to be divided. They are blended into one.

God from all eternity purposed to bring man into this deep union with Himself. A note of it sounds all down revelation. His people are betrothed to Him. They are, as we say, "engaged," but the engagement has never issued in marriage. What has hindered? Sin. It is sin that has blinded love, that has obscured the true nature of the Bridegroom, and hindered the heart from full acceptance. But a time draws on when that unity of God and man whose reality Christ demonstrated will be accomplished in all His people. Now the engagement is postponed, or weakened, or broken off here and there. But a day is coming when that will all end; when the eyes shall be opened to see the true Bridegroom, the King in His beauty; when the perfected, completed union of Christ and His people, in will, in heart, in love, in life, shall be consummated, and God shall be all in all. That is the marriage of the Lamb.

¶ As in the old story, the prince who wooed and won his bride in the disguise of a beggar, brought her to the capital city and the king's palace, took leave of her on some pretext, and caused her to be led all shrinking and solitary into the chamber. When she looked she saw on the throne her lover, her husband, and all fear fled. So the Bride, the Lamb's wife, wooed and won by Him, being found in fashion as a servant, lifts up her eyes and sees on the throne the old face she has learned to love, and is very glad and confident. Her love is made perfect, she has boldness in the day of judgment, and goes to dwell with love for evermore.[1]

¶ In the future world, as compared with this, we may suppose the presence of God will be as in our material world is the bright sunshine compared with the dim twilight. The sun, the more bright, and glorious, and gladdening, and life-elevating it is, is not necessarily on that account the only thing to be looked at and thought of; it is seen in the light it gives, and thought of for the delight which it gives. So even in another world may it be with God; the clearer we see Him, the better and the more rightly may we see and know all *besides* Him, all His creatures, and all that He had made. We have no reason to think that our fellow-beings will be less interesting to us, or less cared for by us, there than here. It is the nearer presence and the clearer view of Him

[1] W. R. Nicoll, *The Lamb of God*, 96.

which will be the source of the truer understanding of, and better sympathy with, them.[1]

II.

The Feast.

1. The language of Scripture referring to this great wedding feast is mystical, intensely spiritual, and offers nothing to gratify our curiosity, our love of literal detail. But is it not enough that this is revealed? It is "the marriage supper of the Lamb." "The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's Land." Intimate, blessed communion is assured to all that Christ gathers around Him. Soul-satisfying fellowship with Father, Son, and Spirit. Perfect satisfaction of all our noblest, loftiest aspirations. "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." To take part in such a celebration is to enter into fellowship with all blessed and redeemed spirits; with all that has been gracious, and pure, and noble, in the generations of earth, and in the worlds that have never known sin.

¶ The marriage feast has a definitely ritual aspect, since, by eating together, bride and bridegroom, as well as their respective relatives and friends (or in some cases these alone), are bound together, or the feast is an outward expression of this union. [The Roman rite of *confarreatio* and similar rites elsewhere, though not of the nature of a feast, express even more clearly the same idea of union.] In some instances the feast is almost the chief or the only rite of marriage; but in any case it has a ritual aspect, though this tends to disappear in more advanced societies, where the feast is little more than an occasion of merry-making, expressing, however, mutual friendliness. . . . Among the Greeks the wedding feast (γάμος) took place after the procession to the bridegroom's house, and it formed one of the most important parts of the proceedings, as there was no civil or religious ceremony. Women as well as men took part in it, though the women sat at a separate table. Among the Romans, after the bride arrived at the bridegroom's house, he gave a feast to the guests, the *coena nuptialis*, and sometimes a second feast, the *repotia*, on the following day. . . . Although the Jewish contract of marriage is a purely civil one, in the sense that the presence of a Rabbi and its ratification in a synagogue are un-

[1] G. Grote, in *The Contemporary Review*, xviii. 139.

essential, yet the occasion is one of profoundly religious import. Marriage being a Divine ordinance, wedding festivities must in the nature of things also bear a decidedly religious character.[1]

2. We dare not say that the feast is a promise that our Lord will love us more than He loves us now, but He will indulge His love for us more; He will manifest it more, we shall see more of it; we shall understand it better; it will appear to us as though He loved us more. He will lay open His whole heart and soul to us, with all its feelings, and secrets, and purposes, and allow us to know them, as far at least as we can understand them, and it will conduce to our happiness to know them. The love of this hour will be the perfection of love. This marriage-feast will be the feast, the triumph, of love—the exalted Saviour showing to the whole universe that He loves us to the utmost bound love can go, and we loving Him with a fervour, a gratitude, an adoration, a delight, that are new even in heaven.

¶ I may think shame to take heaven, who have so highly provoked my Lord Jesus: But seeing Christ's love will shame me, I am content to be ashamed. My desire is that my Lord would give me broader and deeper thoughts, to feed myself with wondering at His love; I would I could weigh it, but I have no balance for it. When I have worn my tongue to the stump in praising of Christ, I have done nothing to Him; I must let Him alone, for my withered arms will not go about His high, wide, long, and broad love. What remaineth then, but that my debt to the love of Christ lie unpaid for all eternity?[2]

3. When we think of this marriage supper of the Lamb, we cannot but return to that supper in the upper chamber of Jerusalem which occupies so strikingly similar a position in the life of Jesus. There Jesus said, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is for you"; "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." That was a feast in which He gave Himself to be for ever the nourishment of His Church. And, in like manner, in the marriage supper of the Lamb, the Lord, who became dead and is alive for evermore, is not only the Bridegroom but also the substance of the feast. In Him and by Him His people lived on earth; in Him and by Him they live for ever.

[1] *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, v. 802, 803, 807.

[2] *Letters of Samuel Rutherford* (ed. 1894), 257.

¶ The Lord's Supper is something more than a "sign," a picture setting forth certain facts and truths so that everyone may see them. It is also a "seal," a personal pledge and token of understanding between Christ and the Christian heart. It is a particular stamp and plain handmark set down on the offer of Jesus in the Word. As a seal it has, no doubt, also a public side. The seal may be worn as a ring on the finger (in the East, on the arm) as well as against the heart (Cant. viii. 6), telling everyone that the wearer has received it. Coming to the Lord's Supper is a badge and profession of following Christ, as truly as wearing scarlet is a badge of being in the Queen's service. Anyone who cares to look can see the red mark on the letter of invitation which you carry in your hand as you go to the Table. But the seal has a private and secret side. Anyone may *see* the seal on the letter: no one may break it and tell the contents but the receiver; anyone may see the ring on your finger, but none but the wearer can say what attachment it conveys, or whether there is any attachment conveyed at all.[1]

III.

The Guests.

1. Who are "they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb"? As we raise the question we are reminded of the mysterious doctrine of election, and of the distinction which Jesus Himself made: "Many are called, but few are chosen." And we tremble as we think how Jesus warned His hearers of the scrutiny to which all are subjected.

But let us remember for our comfort that marvellous parable of grace which tells of the householder who, when they that were first bidden to his feast treated with indifference and insult the invitation of their friend, sent forth his servants to the streets and lanes of the city, and then to the highways and hedges, to compel the very vagrants and beggars to come in that the wedding feast might be furnished with guests. Jesus compared the Kingdom of Heaven to that generous host and his generous, overflowing hospitality.

¶ The invitation, when despised by those to whom it was originally addressed, was conveyed to those who could least of

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 65.

all anticipate any such communication. The class of outcasts described in the Parable of the Great Supper is recognizable at all times. They are those who seem to be beyond help and hope—the maimed, the blind, the vagrant, the destitute, the criminal. Such descriptions are self-interpreting. Whoever finds himself in a wretched and abandoned condition is taught here that God invites him to His table. He who cannot discover in his condition one hopeful symptom; he who is crushed and defeated; he who has been maimed in the service of sin, and has laid himself down by the hedgeside, to let the busy stream of life run past without noticing him; he who is utterly weary and heart-broken, and knows not how he can ever be restored to virtuous and serviceable living—to him comes God's invitation to the utmost of His bounty. The servants were sent to invite promiscuously every one they found; bold sinners in the streets, secret and shamefaced sinners in the lanes, proud sinners in the highways, and woebegone sinners by the hedges; wherever they found a man, wherever human life yet stirred the mass of filthy rags, *that* they were to bring to the feast. Such persons were to be *compelled* to come in. The servants were not to let them away to dress themselves under promise of coming in an hour. They were to bring them. And if the lame gave as an excuse that they could not go, or if the blind said they would have been glad to go had they been able to find their way, the servant was to become eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; he was not to think he had cleared his conscience by giving them the invitation, but was to see them inside the guest-chamber. Such is the freedom and such the urgency of the Gospel of Christ.[1]

¶ One of the greatest of French preachers—Massillon, to wit—has a marvellous sermon entitled, "On the Small Number of the Elect"; but, in spite of much that is solemn and true in the discourse, I cannot agree with the sentiment implied in its title. Hitherto, indeed, in the world the Church of Christ has been in the minority; but when the supper of the Lamb shall be celebrated above, it shall not be so. The saved shall vastly, and many times over, outnumber the lost, and the house of God shall be filled. Whether we be saved or lost shall make little difference, so far as the furnishing of heaven with guests is concerned; but it will make an awful difference to us. We shall not be missed, amid the numbers without number that people heaven, but oh, how much we shall miss! God's purpose shall be accomplished, whether we accept the invitation of the gospel or not. If we accept His grace, it shall be accomplished in our salvation; but if

[1] Marcus Dods, *The Parables of Our Lord*, ii. 101.

we ignore His invitation, it shall be accomplished in our everlasting exclusion from the feast.[1]

2. To the question, Who will be at the wedding feast? the whole Bible is an answer. Everyone who accepts the invitation. All mankind is invited. The invitation is as wide as the human race. No man will be left out in the darkness because he did not receive an invitation. Many times at wedding feasts in this world there are jealousies and heart-burnings because only a limited number can be invited. But there will not be in all the universe one soul that can say: "I was shut out into the outer darkness because I never received an invitation to attend the marriage feast of Jesus Christ." If anyone asks, Who will be shut out from the feast? the answer is just as plain and simple. Only those who refuse the invitation. It is impossible that they should be there. That they are not there is not God's fault. He does everything that He can do to bring them there. It can be the fault only of the man or woman who refuses the invitation to come. It is not the arbitrary decree of God that a man who will not accept Christ, who refuses His friendship and His mercy here on earth, shall not enjoy the pleasure of heaven. It is simply that in the very nature of things he cannot.

¶ "Blessed are they which are called unto the Marriage Supper of the Lamb." This beatitude is specially vouched for as a true saying of God, and baptized Christians have received the call; yet so long as mortal life endures each soul must use all diligence to secure the blessing, probation rendering every promise contingent. The two Divine Parables of the Great Supper and the Marriage of the King's Son warn us that the call of grace condemns whom it does not save.[2]

¶ There are two different invitations to the marriage supper of the Lamb. One is to be issued from the throne of judgment; and the date will be the last day. The other is issued from the throne of grace; and the date is to-day. It is the former of these that the Apostle specially refers to in the text,—when Jesus, after the transactions of that grand assize are over, will turn round to those on His right hand, and say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world": come away with Me to the marriage supper

[1] W. M. Taylor, *The Parables of Our Saviour*, 303.
[2] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 439.

of the Lamb. This invitation will be addressed only to the people of God, the saved. The other invitation is addressed to all men, and the date is—now. The command of the King to His servants as they go to invite the guests is, "As many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." Shall we not all gladly welcome and eagerly accept the invitation to-day? And shall we not make it the one great object of our desire, the one grand effort of our life, that we may form part of that glorious and blessed company?[1]

From the dust of the weary highway,
From the smart of sorrow's rod,
Into the royal presence,
They are bidden as guests of God.
The veil from their eyes is taken;
Sweet mysteries they are shown.
Their doubts and fears are over,
For they know as they are known.

For them there should be rejoicing
And festival array,
As for the bride in her beauty,
Whom love hath taken away—
Sweet hours of peaceful waiting
Till the path that we have trod
Shall end at the Father's gateway,
And we are the guests of God.[2]

3. Whilst the scope of the invitation to the marriage supper may be wide, the context makes it clear that Christ must not only be on us as a robe, but also be in us as a life, if we are to have the hope of glory. To say this in no way interferes with our completeness in the Beloved alone, or with the fact that not by works of righteousness that we have done, but by grace, are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God. All our salvation is of Christ, but the change upon us must be internal as well as external. The idea suggested in the verse following the text, that the raiment in which the ransomed saints shall appear at the marriage supper of the Lamb will have been woven out of the deeds done in the body, imparts a new and quite transcendent value to our earthly life. It sets the vanishing

[1] J. Kelman, *Redeeming Judgment*, 194. [2] Mary Frances Butts.

present in causal relation to the eternal future, and stamps the homely duties of our common days with an incalculable worth. Although God may be said to clothe the soul in fitting raiment for the marriage supper of the Lamb, He certainly does not do so mechanically from without, but vitally from within. Character must ever be the determining factor of destiny. That character we are weaving now, and it will be the garment of the soul through its eternal years. The possibility of a wedding garment has been placed within easy reach of all by the royal grace of the King. That possibility lies in the acceptance of His will as the rule of our life. Immediately upon its acceptance that will becomes within us the force of a new life-principle, conforming us to the mind of God, and forthwith assimilating to itself a body after its kind. Behind this veil of flesh sits this mysterious principle, throwing its invisible shuttles, and investing the soul with the garments in which it must finally stand in the bridal-hall of the King.

¶ What the guest wanted who lacked the wedding garment was *righteousness*, both in its root of faith and its flower of charity. He had not, according to the pregnant image of St. Paul, here peculiarly appropriate, "*put on* Christ";—in which putting on of Christ both faith and charity are included,—faith as the investing power, charity or holiness as the invested robe. By faith we recognize a righteousness out of and above us, and which yet is akin to us, and wherewith our spirits can be clothed; which righteousness is in Christ, who is therefore the Lord our Righteousness. And this righteousness by the appropriate and assimilative power of faith we also make our own; we are clothed upon with it, so that it becomes, in that singularly expressive term, our *habit*,—the righteousness imputed has become also a righteousness infused, and is in us charity or holiness, or more accurately still, constitutes the complex of all Christian graces as they abide in the man, and show themselves in his life. . . . We may affirm of the wedding garment that it is righteousness in its largest sense, the whole adornment of the new and spiritual man; including the faith without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. xi. 6), and the holiness without which no man shall see Him (Heb. xii. 14), or shall, like this guest, only see Him to perish at His presence. It is at once the faith which is the root of all graces, the mother of all virtues, and likewise those graces and virtues themselves.[1]

[1] R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord*, 241.

¶ In June, G. F. Watts wrote asking him to lunch any day at Little Holland House. He knew nothing of the work Shields was commencing, but said: "I should like to have an occasional chat about serious art. I wish you would kindly send me a line and tell me the correct colours for the draperies of Faith. I know you are an authority." To which Shields replied: "For answer to your question and compliment, I am no 'authority.' I know none on the subject but the Authority of the Word revealed. Paul declares Faith is God's gift. She is Heaven-born. She is the assurance of Heavenly things to mortals shut in by sensuous things, therefore the *skies' hue* is hers, her mantle and her wings: and for her robe, *white*—unspotted. And this because they who seek righteousness by works fail of that which only Faith gives. The 'fine linen of the Saints' symbolizes their righteousness in the Apocalypse, and it is said that their robes were made '*white* in the blood of the Lamb.' If I seek where alone I look to find, this is what is given me, and it is the best I can offer in response to your question. I bow to tradition only where it agrees with the written word."[1]

[1] *The Life and Letters of Frederic Shields*, 309.

The Opening of the Books.

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The Opening of the Books.

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.—Rev. xx. 12.

1. These words form a significant part of one of the most solemn passages in the Bible. It describes the final judgment, the great assize, in which men appear before God that they may be judged "according to their works." The throne before which they appear is described as the "great white throne"; great, that is, in contrast to the thrones which are mentioned in the earlier portions of the Book; white as emblematic of the stainless purity of Him who sits upon it. The people who stand before the throne are from every nation and kindred and tribe and tongue. They are now assembled to receive the Judge's verdict on the lives which they have lived.

2. The imagery was evidently suggested by Daniel's vision of judgment (vii. 10): "Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgement was set, and the books were opened." The idea of a special book of life is to be found in the same prophet (xii. 1): "At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." But this figure can be traced much farther back. We remember the passionate intercession of Moses for his people (Exod. xxxii. 32): "If thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." And not to speak of some passages in the prophets, which speak of "those that are written among the living" (Is. iv. 3; Ezek. xiii. 9), one of the imprecations in the Sixty-ninth Psalm (v. 28) is, "Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written with the righteous." These Old Testament passages illustrate the meaning of our Lord's promise (Rev. iii. 5) to him that over-

cometh: "I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." St. John is not the only New Testament writer who has adopted this language. St. Luke (x. 20) records our Lord's words to the seventy disciples when they returned successful from their mission, "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." The Epistle to the Hebrews (xii. 23) speaks of "the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven"; and in the Epistle to the Philippians (iv. 3) St. Paul has the very phrase, "Clement also, and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life."

I.

The Subjects of the Judgment.

1. "I saw the dead," says the Seer, "the great and the small, standing before the throne." It is often said that this judgment is a judgment of the wicked only, and therefore only for condemnation. But the context suggests that the judgment is extended to all humanity; and only in that sense can the wording of the passage itself be taken. The phrase "the great and the small," which is of frequent occurrence in the Apocalypse, is a synonym for all men (except where it is expressly limited, xi. 18). The dead, small and great, will stand before God; *all* will stand, all the righteous, as well as all the wicked, from the Apostles downwards. St. Paul is very emphatic upon the fact that he himself will be judged: "He that judgeth me is the Lord." "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body" (2 Cor. v. 10). Again, Rom. xiv. 10, "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." "The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim. iv. 1).

¶ The real significance of the scene lies in the vivid picturing of that great and solemn truth that we must all stand before

the judgment-seat of Christ, and that before Him there is nothing hidden which shall not be revealed. Then shall every human life appear in its true light, stripped of all the deceptive adornments which have given a fictitious respectability to ingenious fraud, and a fatal popularity to adroit wickedness and splendid vice. Then shall men be judged, not by rank, or success, or achievement, but according to their works, as it is twice stated here, and according to whether they have any life towards God. The works and the life towards God must be combined. A man may have, from the activities of his Christian works, a name to live and yet be dead: the life-book and the work-book combine to mark the real servant of Christ. If he labours more abundantly than all, it is Christ who works in him, for his life is a life by the faith of the Son of God.[1]

2. Why are only the dead mentioned? Why not the living? Swete thinks it is because they form so insignificant a minority; but he suggests also that the omission may be due to the fact that the keen interest which the first generation had felt in the bearing of the Parousia upon the living (1 Thess. iv. 13, 14) had abated before the end of the century.

¶ In that great judgment-day the difference of sizes among human lives, of which we make so much, passes away, and all human beings, in simple virtue of their human quality, are called to face the everlasting righteousness. The child and the greybeard, the scholar and the boor, however their lives may have been separated here, come together there. It is upon the moral ground that the most separated souls must always meet. All may be good: all may be bad: therefore before Him whose nature is the decisive touchstone of goodness and badness in every nature which is laid before it, all souls of all the generations of mankind may be assembled. The only place where all can meet, and every soul claim its relationship with every other soul, is before the throne of God. The Father's presence alone furnishes the meeting-place for all the children, regardless of differences of age or wisdom.[2]

3. What is meant by standing before God? We are apt to picture to ourselves a great dramatic scene, host beyond host, rank behind rank, the millions who have lived upon the earth, all standing crowded together in the indescribable presence of One who looks not merely at the mass but at the individual, and sees through the whole life and character of every single soul. The

[1] W. B. Carpenter, *The Book of Revelation*, 237.
[2] Phillips Brooks, *Twenty Sermons*, 60.

picture is sublime, and it is what the words of St. John are intended to suggest. But we must get behind the picture to its meaning. The picture must describe not one scene only, but the whole nature and condition of the everlasting life. The souls of men in the eternal world are always "standing before God." And what does that mean? We understand at once if we consider that that before which a man stands is the standard, or test, or source of judgment for his life. Every soul that counts itself capable of judgment and responsibility stands in some presence by which the nature of its judgment is decreed. The higher the presence, the loftier and greater, though often the more oppressed and anxious, is the life. A weak man who wants to shirk the seriousness and anxiety of life goes down into some lower chamber and stands before some baser judge, whose standard will be less exacting. A strong, ambitious man presses up from judgment-room to judgment-room, and is not satisfied with meeting any standard perfectly so long as there is any higher standard which he has not faced.

¶ The Judge is God, the Father in the Son, the Son in the Father; and thus the judgment is searching and complete and is answered by the consciences of those upon whom it is executed. They see that the Judge's eye penetrates into the most secret recesses of their hearts, and that He is One who has been in the same position, has fought the same battle, and has endured the same trials as themselves. Thus His sentence finds an echo in their hearts, and they are speechless. Thus also judgment becomes really judgment, and not merely the infliction of punishment by resistless power.[1]

¶ "Stand before God"—past kneeling, past praying: not to be converted, but sentenced. *Now*, not *then*, is the day of salvation: not *then* except for the already saved.[2]

II.

The Ground of the Judgment.

1. "The dead were judged . . . according to their works." It is therefore a judgment according to works, according to the things

[1] W. Milligan, *The Book of Revelation*, 353.

[2] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 473.

done in the body, which no doubt includes the things spoken and thought. And a judgment according to works is clearly taught in all the Scriptures—in the Gospels (Matt. xvi. 17 and parallels), by St. Paul (Rom. xiv. 10, 12; 1 Cor. iv. 5; 2 Cor. v. 10; Gal. vi. 7) and by St. John (v. 29; Rev. xx. 12, 13). But there is also another doctrine taught—that salvation is granted to faith, and to faith only. How are these two doctrines to be reconciled?

"The fundamental grace," says Godet,[1] "is that of the forgiveness of sins, and it presupposes no other moral condition than faith only. But this immense act of grace is no sooner granted by God, and accepted by man, than there results from it a new task, with the responsibility which attaches to it. This is the work of sanctification; the renewal of the life in the likeness of Christ. And this is the *work*, according to which the believer will one day be judged." Godet recalls by way of illustration the parable of the Unmerciful Servant.

And this is in accordance with reason and experience. In this world men are judged according to their works. "I believe it to be true," says Dr. Salmon, "that Nature never forgives: the utmost indulgence she bestows is often to postpone the execution of her penalty. In this life the rewards for what is well done are duly paid, the punishment for what is done ill strictly exacted. And what the Bible says is that the same principle is followed in the future life."

¶ When men cry out against the teaching of an everlasting hell to which they have long listened, nothing could be more mistaken than to try to win their faith by a mere sweeping aside of the whole truth of retribution; nothing could be more futile than to try to make them believe in God by stripping the God we offer them of His Divine attributes of judgment and discrimination. But if there comes, as there must come, out of the tumult a deeper sense of the essential, the eternal connection between character and destiny; if men looking deeper into spiritual life are taught to see that the wrath of God and the love of God are not contradictory, but the inseparable utterances of the one same nature; if punishment be fastened close to sin as the shadow to the substance, able to go, *certain* to go, where sin can go *and nowhere else*—then the tumult will bring a peace of deeper and completer faith. But surely it will not be easier for a man to believe the new and deep than the old crude doctrine. It will lay

[1] *Studies on the New Testament*, 179.

an even deeper and more awful burden on his conscience. It will make life more and not less solemn, when men come to see and feel the punishment *in* the sin than when they listened for the threats of punishment as men at sea listen for the breakers on the shore whilê they are sailing in smooth waters, which give them no intimation of how far away or near the breakers are.[1]

2. At the same time, judgments in this life are not always unerring, or always passed on good grounds; and St. John is probably making a contrast as well as a comparison. He knows that Cæsar has a throne, and that men are made great or small by standing before that throne, but he objects to the ground upon which judgment is given. Men are given their places without reference to character; they are not judged according to their works. Their position is often determined by arbitrary circumstances—family, name, wealth, influence. He sees men stand before a new throne, before a tribunal guided by other principles. Many of the first become last, and many of the last become first. Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, were at the top of the list in the old society; in the new they are very near the end of it—saved from being quite at the end only by the imputation of insanity. And in the place of honour which was held by Tiberius and Caligula and Nero stands many a despised slave, many a deformed outcast,—outcast by reason of his deformity,—many a poor invalid who was considered unfit for survival, and whom the old world's chariot had passed, contemptuous, by.

¶ A friend of mine who had travelled in America told me that he once heard Colonel Ingersoll lecture on the Last Judgment. That blasphemous atheist described with all the brilliant sarcasm which he possesses the last dread scene, and pictured different characters coming up to receive their sentence. First there came one who had ever helped his neighbour, who in life had done all that he could to make the world brighter and happier; and Jesus, the Supreme Judge, asked him if he believed the story of Eve and the rib; and on his replying in the negative, sentenced him to eternal damnation; and so on with a number of characters. Then there came a defalcating bank director who had broken the heart of the widow and ruined the orphan by his dishonesty and hypocrisy; but he believed this story, and so was rewarded with eternal happiness. Ingersoll's caricature is more than a caricature; it is a wilful lie.[2]

[1] Phillips Brooks, *Essays and Addresses*, 50. [2] H. S. Lunn.

III.

The Evidence.

The evidence is in the books. "The books were opened." Now the books that are opened may be taken as the records of man's works wherever they may be found, although Augustine is probably right when he says that there is supposed to be a separate record for every man.

i. The Book of Character.

1. We must think, not of a modern volume, but of an ancient book. Such a book would consist of a long band of parchment, or other substance, written over usually on one side only, and rolled upon a roller, so that it would form a scroll, which on being opened out could present all that was written therein to view simultaneously. The fundamental idea of a book is a record. Things that have happened in the history of the world are chronicled in books, or the thoughts that are the history of the inner world of a man are in like manner committed to writing, the object in both cases being to transmit to those who may follow a knowledge of what has been done or thought. Books are to the race what memory is to the individual; hence a book may well be used to signify the mind's power of recalling the past. The power in God which answers to memory in man is therefore called His "*book.*"

¶ My page in the Book of Works is to me awful: the contents are my own, the record is not my own. It is my life's record without oversights, without false entries or suppressions: any good set down accurately as good; all evil, unless erased by Divine Compassion, set down accurately as evil. Nothing whatever is there except what I have genuinely endeavoured, compassed, done, been: I meant it all, though I meant not to meet it again face to face. It is as if all along one had walked in a world of invisible photographic cameras charged with instantaneous plates. The Book of Life may seem yet more awful, kept secret as it has been from the foundation of the world in the knowledge of God Omniscient. Yet is it really so? It is in fact no independent statement, but appears to be essentially an index or summary of the other. I who composed although I compiled not my Book of

Works, I myself virtually entered or entered not my name in the corresponding Book of Life: to dread this beyond the other, is to dread a sum total rather than those very items which produce the total. For whilst we read that "the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the Books," it was none the less "according to their works."[1]

¶ "Consider" [Emerson writes in his journal in 1838] "that always a license attends reformation. We say, Your actions are not registered in a book by a recording angel for an invisible king,—action number one, number two; up to number one million, —but the retribution that shall be is the same retribution that now is. Base action makes you base; holy action hallows you. Instantly the man is relieved from a terror that girded him like a belt, has lost the energy that terror gave him, and when now the temptation is strong he will taste the sin and know. Now I hate the loss of the tonic. The end is so valuable; to have escaped the degradation of a crime is in itself so pure a benefit that I should not be very scrupulous as to the means. I would thank any blunder, any sleep, any bigot, any fool, that misled me into such a good."[2]

2. Each of us writes the book of his own character. Daily and hourly we are writing ourselves down. We bear about with us, in the character we have made, the whole volume of the past. In everything we do and think in the present, in the way we meet every circumstance of life, we go on forming that character. Our book is there, and it will be opened in the hour of judgment.

¶ Has it ever occurred to you as one strong motive to a good and pure and useful life, that we enter the world of spirits, where more things will occur than we in this imperfect state ever dream of, with the very character which we acquire in the world of sense? If we are selfish, cold, and unloving here, we shall be the very same there. Not an attribute of character can death change. It has no power over the immaterial mind, only over the perishable body does its sway extend. When the spirit bursts free and happy into the blaze of eternal day, it will be the very spirit which breathes within us now; the same feelings, longings, loves, desires, only, in the case of the Christlike, purified at last from all taint of sin.[3]

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 473.
[2] J. E. Cabot, *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, i. 332.
[3] *Dr. MacGregor of St. Cuthberts*, 94.

3. All that is set down in this book is thoroughly trustworthy. Autobiographies, as a rule, are not so. They are partial, prejudiced, one-sided. They must be so, for the simple reason that no living person, however saintly, dare reveal to the world all the secrets of his own heart. There have been good and worthy men who have walked on serene heights in company with Christ, and who have told us something of the story of their own victories and defeats; but no one has ever told us the whole story. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and there is no one who is brave enough to draw aside the covering and reveal all that is in it. We are glad that there is not, for the story of the man who did that would not make pleasant reading. The jealousies, the spites, the uncharities, to say nothing of other and darker things, would shock and appal us. But in the book of character the record is complete. Nothing is withheld, nothing misrepresented. Everything done is set down there in naked truth, and the story in its totality is to be thoroughly relied on.

¶ We are all writing our life-histories here, as if with one of those "manifold writers," a black, blank page beneath the flimsy sheet on which we write; but presently the black page will be taken away, and the writing will stand out plain on the page behind, that we did not see. Life is the unsubstantial page on which our pen rests; the black page is death; and the page beneath is that indelible transcript of our earthly actions, which we shall find waiting for us to read with shame and confusion of face or with humble joy in another world.[1]

The deeds we do, the words we say,—
Into still air they seem to fleet,
We count them ever past;
But they shall last,
In the dread judgment they
And we shall meet.[2]

ii. The Book of Influence.

There is another larger book on which our words and actions write themselves; for they influence not only ourselves but others. We print our thoughts, our doings, on those we live with, on thousands whom we shall never see, but whom our work

[1] A. Maclaren, in *Christian Endeavour World*, May 12, 1910, p. 644.
[2] J. Keble, *Lyra Innocentium*.

has influenced. We die, but this writing of ours does not die with us. Its power for good or evil still continues. Its book still speaks to bless or curse. Even on the whole race, so closely are we bound together, something of us is written. Our book is there, in prose or poetry, in song or tale, our unconscious literature, fraught with joy or pain to men, with good or ill.

Babbage spoke of the traces spoken words leave on the physical atmosphere. There is a moral atmosphere which presses on us all, though as in the case of the physical atmosphere we feel not the pressure, and scarce take note of its existence unless when its motions are unusually violent. That atmosphere is the public opinion of the community in which we live, which is practically the law that regulates our conduct. On the wholesomeness of this atmosphere our moral health in great measure depends. But it too responds obediently to every impulse communicated to it by those who live in it. Public opinion is, in short, nothing but the aggregate representation of the moral sentiments of each individual of the community; and plainly each change in the moral condition of any individual affects that of the community; in an infinitely small degree, no doubt, but the great changes in nature are the results of the accumulation of movements each infinitesimally small. Yet, however small the direct effect of the action of one individual on the whole community, it might be large enough in his own immediate neighbourhood. Poisonous miasma which might have no perceptible effect when diffused through the whole atmosphere might be enough to make a whole house uninhabitable.

¶ Science has been showing us of late something of the force residing in the actinic rays of light, by which it transfers impressions from one object to another. Wherever light goes, it carries and leaves images. The trees mirror one another, and opposing mountains wear each the likeness of the other upon their rocky breasts. These fine properties in nature suggest corresponding probabilities in man. It is poor logic to accept these fresh miracles of nature that are being so often revealed, and hold that we have compassed man and his possibilities. If such a process as this is going on in the dull substances without, how much more surely is it going on in the soul. All contact leaves its mark.[1]

[1] T. T. Munger, *The Freedom of Faith*, 353.

The lost days of my life until to-day,
What were they, could I see them on the street
Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat
Sown once for food but trodden into clay?
Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?

I do not see them here; but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
"I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?"
"And I—and I—thyself," (lo! each one saith,)
"And thou thyself to all eternity!"[1]

IV.

The Book of Life.

1. Judgment is tempered with mercy. In the text, as everywhere in the Book of Revelation, there is a touch of mystery, through which, as through a veil, we seem to see the form of truth. We read: "And the books were opened." But we read further: "And another book was opened, which is the book of life." We know that, throughout the Apocalypse, "the book of life" is that record in which God keeps the names of those who, in this world, are faithful to Jesus Christ. In it are inscribed the names of those who live the "overcoming life"—those who hold this world to be a field of battle, and who, with their deepest and truest will, are contending for the life of the Spirit. Of these, the names are in "the book of life."

In this "book of life" God has the record of our tears. There He may read the story of our private lamentings, our shame, our sorrow, our prayers, our cries, our protests against ourselves, our final humility of soul. And it is the message and gospel of this Scripture that those very things which, for the most part, the world could not see, those things which seemed to ourselves to stop short and to avail nothing, shall be known at the last to

[1] D. G. Rossetti.

have been the precious and decisive things, the interceding things, the things which in the sight of God have the saving power, for they are bound up with the eternal intercession of Christ's Passion, and for Christ's sake are accounted for righteousness.

¶ The best account of the ideas associated with the Book of Life will be found in an article under that title in the second volume of the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*. In that article Dr. Alfred Jeremias of Leipzig shows that the idea of heavenly books is present in the religion of Babylonia, Egypt, Persia, India, China, and Islam. In the mythology of Babylon, reference is often made to the "tables of destiny," which probably refer to two heavenly tablets, on one of which were written the commands of the gods, on the other the records of the life of men. The idea of a reckoning kept in heaven of men's deeds frequently occurs in the Apocryphal literature. The suggestion of such a reckoning may have come from the roll or register of citizens, such as the register of the citizens of Jerusalem referred to in Is. iv. 3. Such a roll God Himself keeps of the names of His own people. Moses refers to it when he says, "And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Exod. xxxii. 32). In Ps. lxxix. 28 it is called the "book of life." In Rev. xiii. 8 it becomes the Lamb's book of life.

It is as the Lamb's book of life that it is referred to in our text. The book contains the names of those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. After all the books on which the works of men have been recorded are opened, the Book of Life is opened. Upon the record of the other books, what can a man hope for but condemnation? But those whose names are found in the Book of Life have been purchased unto God through the precious blood of the Lamb. There is therefore now no condemnation to them.[1]

2. The original record is written, but it is not permanent; the story is complete, but it is not ineradicable. The writing may be blotted out; the page may be recovered. The story which is spoilt may be written over again. "What I have written I have written," said the obstinate procurator: and many a man has been inclined to take up his words and to repeat them with a meaning which they would not bear as they came from the lips of that astute Roman. "Done is done," we hear men say, "and it can never be undone." There is a sense, of course, in which they

[1] *Expository Times*, xxi. 210.

are right; there is another and deeper sense in which they are most certainly wrong. Done is not done in the sense that all the consequences to which we, by our sin, have exposed ourselves must inevitably come upon us. Mercy has intervened in order to prevent that. God has given His best that the deepest and darkest penalties to which sin has exposed us may not come upon us. Through His gift its consequences may be diverted, and the sin itself may be put away.

¶ You know the incident in the life of Martin Luther, how the poor monk in his cell was visited in his night visions by the Arch-enemy of souls. The Tempter brought him great rolls which he bade him read, and he saw in his dream that those contained the record of his own life, and that they were written with his own hand. And the Tempter said to him, "Is that true? Did you write it?" and the poor stricken monk had to confess it was all true, and scroll after scroll was unrolled and the same confession was perforce wrung from him. And then the evil one prepared to take his departure, having reduced the poor monk to abject misery; but at that moment there came to him as in a flash another vision, and he turned to the Tempter and said, "It is true, every word of it. But write across it all: 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.'"[1]

Almightie Judge, how shall poore wretches brook
Thy dreadfull look,
Able a heart of iron to appall,
When thou shalt call
For ev'ry man's peculiar book?

What others mean to do, I know not well;
Yet I heare tell,
That some will turn thee to some leaves therein
So void of sinne,
That they in merit shall excell.

But I resolve, when thou shalt call for mine,
That to decline,
And thrust a Testament into thy hand:
Let that be scann'd.
There thou shalt finde my faults are thine.[2]

[1] *Church Pulpit Year Book*, 1913, p. 245.
[2] George Herbert, *The Temple*.

A New Heaven and a New Earth.

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A New Heaven and a New Earth.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away.—Rev. xxi. 1.

The Book of Revelation is the "Divina Commedia" of Scripture, alive with moral passion, alight with noble imagination, a fitting climax to the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles, and doubly interesting to our own time from the fact that it is the expression of a revolt against a worn-out world-order, a civilization of custom, armament, and law alien to the genius of the new Faith, and of aspiration after a Divine Environment, which shall be great enough to contain the "nations of them that are saved," and noble enough to be in harmony with "the life hid with Christ in God."

In this chapter the writer is drawing to the close of his task. He has described fully the unseen enemies which threatened the life of the Church in his own days, and which threaten it still, and he has traced to their true source the evils which beset her. He has further shown how in the end Christ vindicates His cause, and triumphs over the powers of evil, whose downfall and final doom have been disclosed. But though he has thus set forth the victory of the Church, he has said but little of her future, or of the character of her life. He has briefly alluded to these things, but that is all. He now therefore goes back, and closes the series of visions with a description of the bliss which is laid up for the faithful.

1. The belief in a happier age, a peaceful earth, a gracious and bountiful heaven, and a strong race of immortals, is as old and as common as man. The ancient Greeks knew it. Hesiod describes how the gods who dwelt on Olympus made a golden race of speaking men. They lived in careless felicity, free from the labours, sorrows, tribulations of men, fed by a bountiful earth

which of its own sweet will blossomed into plenty, ever delighting in festivals; and when death came it came to them as it comes to those overtaken with sleep. But that golden age was in the past; the present, and, so far as they saw, the future, was an iron age. The men who lived in it knew no joy, but had the "sorrow's crown of sorrow," which is "remembering happier things." They toiled, fretted; corrosive care claimed them for its own; and they anticipated a miserable old age and a painful death. Neighbour robbed neighbour; city sacked city; parents grew old and lost their honour; men who were evil were more respected than men who were good; malice, envy, with its millionfold tongue of poison, exulted in ills, and turned on all pitiful mortals its pitiless and baleful glance. The golden age was past; the iron age had come; the men who lived in it lived far from those happinesses which speak of toil rewarded, hope realized, and joy attained. That is the language of Nature, not of grace. Nature looks back, sees there the happiness, a thing lost and irrecoverable. Grace looks before, sees there the joy, and anticipates by labour the moment of its coming.

¶ Every religious enthusiast and reformer from St. Paul to John Wesley has been fired with a devout imagination. They were each and all filled with some vision of a new heaven and a new earth, and were happy only so far as they were permitted to pursue it unmolested. And if there is one lesson more than another which history has to teach, it is this, that without the vision there is no progress, and without fidelity to unrealized ideals there can be no solid advancement in any department of life. . . . And so, looking for a new heaven and a new earth simply means that we are for ever exchanging the rule of the sensuous for the rule of the spiritual, and that we are seeking our motives for conduct and character in the absolute gospel of Jesus Christ, and not in any of the commonplace maxims of self-indulgence or earthly expediency.[1]

2. It is well to remember the time at which the words were written down. The Revelation came to St. John in a time of the utmost danger to the Church. Jew and heathen were at last united in hatred to the name of Christ, and were putting forth all their power to destroy those who believed in Him. St. James,

[1] J. Cuckson, *Faith and Fellowship*, 54.

St. Peter, St. Paul, had lately passed to their heavenly home through the gate of a glorious death. The fall of the Holy City was close at hand. The old memorials of God's presence were vanishing from the earth. They whom from of old He had chosen to be His own people were being cast away and scattered upon the face of the world. Death and hell were riding triumphant over everything that was marked with God's name. Change was come in its most terrible form, as sheer destruction, destruction most of all of that which was best of all. Then it was, when God seemed to be deserting the earth, that a great voice was heard out of the throne saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more; the first things are passed away." The first heaven and the first earth were passed away; a new heaven and a new earth could already be seen by one whose eyes God opened. But behind the new heaven and the new earth was He who made them; and what, when He Himself spoke, He announced as His work was the work of making all things new.

¶ The new heaven and the new earth are here already, for they mean only a new and different relation between God and men—between heaven and earth—from that which existed before. Since Christ ascended and sat at the right hand of God, the new heaven has begun. Since the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father appeared, the earth also has become new.[1]

¶ The magnificent hope and prediction of God's final and decisive victory find expression in nearly every part of the sacred volume. The Psalms and Prophecies, not less than the Gospels and Epistles, recognize the conflict which is going on unceasingly between God and forces hostile to Him; between God and the Satanic hosts, the powers of darkness and the obstinacy of depraved and misguided man. But, one and all, they declare that the conflict is not to be perpetual. The underlying and final note of all their predictions is keyed to a song of Divine victory, which will be complete and universal. There is to be an end of iniquity, and the wicked are to cease from troubling. The enemies of the Lord, and all that is opposed to Him, are in some way to perish, or

[1] Schleiermacher.

be subdued under His feet. There are to be new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and nothing but righteousness will be known, and God is to be King over the whole earth, and by implication over every unimaginable place beyond the earth.[1]

3. When we give the words the widest range, and understand them of God's whole government of the world, He is *always* making all things new. Even when the course of the world is very quiet and seems to be at a standstill, He is but changing the manner of this His work, for some of His most wonderful renewals are wrought in silence. He is Himself described as He that sitteth on the throne. He rules, but rests as He rules. The Author of unceasing change, He knows no change within Himself. He is older than the oldest things; His name is the Ancient of Days. The old and the new have thus alike their perfect pattern in Him. His counsels partake of both; on the one hand, they stand fast from age to age; on the other, they are ever advancing from step to step by new births of time.

¶ The ends for which nature exists are not in itself, but in the spiritual sphere beyond. Nature always points to something beyond itself, backward to a cause, above to a law, and forward to ends in the spiritual system. God is always developing nature to a capacity to be receptive of higher powers. Under the tension of the Divine energy in it, it always seems to be "striving its bounds to overpass." This discloses in nature a certain reality in Hegel's conception, that nature is always aspiring to return to the spiritual whence it came.[2]

¶ Some have interpreted this passage as applying to the millennium, but, as St. Augustine says, to do so is "audacious," because the previous chapters clearly show that the millennium, the resurrection and the judgment have all preceded this, the final, act in the awe-inspiring drama shown to us in the Revelation. That there are several "heavens" such references as the "seventh" and the "third" seem to indicate; and if, as many think, our earth is only one of many worlds, peopled it may be by beings of varied forms, powers and attainments, it may easily follow that after being caught into the clouds for judgment, the saints will descend to a renovated "heaven and earth"—the "Holy City," purified and cleansed for a people beloved of the Lord. That His

[1] J. G. Greenhough, *The Doctrine of the Last Things*, 234.
[2] S. Harris, *The Self-Revelation of God.*

earth, thus changed, will be the final home of the righteous is no new idea, but one which has been taught from the beginning by Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Theodoret, Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostom, Luther, Adams, Wesley, Chalmers, and a host of others.[1]

4. God not only makes the new world, but gives the power to see and appreciate its beauty. God creates the paradise and catches up a St. Paul to hear unspeakable words—unspeakable for grandeur and infinite sweetness. We can soar into paradises of beauty only as we rise by means of the upbearing wings of infinite power and love. When a man enters the spirit sphere, he sees a new heaven and a new earth. When the earth child is born, the natural eye is dim, and the mind is sleeping. When the heaven child is born, the spiritual eye is quickened to see, the mind is awake to appreciate loveliness. A man like St. John, who had a clear eye for the great new conception that God is love, was the man to see a new heaven of love and a new earth of sweetness. He that dwelleth in love will see new worlds of love. Greatness is seen and appreciated by the great. New worlds of love must be seen and appreciated by the loving. There must be not only the beautiful, but also an eye and a mind for the beautiful. The apostle of love must see the vision of love. Pearls are trampled by swine. A new heaven and a new earth are not seen by eyes which are earthbound.

¶ It was of the essence of Blake's sanity that he could always touch the sky with his finger. "To justify the soul's frequent joy in what cannot be defined to the intellectual part, or to calculation": that, which is Walt Whitman's definition of his own aim, defines Blake's. Where others doubted he knew; and he saw where others looked vaguely into the darkness. He saw so much further than others into what we call reality, that others doubted his report, not being able to check it for themselves; and when he saw truth naked he did not turn aside his eyes. Nor had he the common notion of what truth is, or why it is to be regarded. He said: "When I tell a truth it is not for the sake of convincing those who do not know it, but for the sake of defending those who do." And his criterion of truth was the inward certainty of instinct or intuition, not the outward certainty of fact. "God forbid," he said, "that Truth should be confined to mathematical

[1] J. E. Watts-Ditchfield, *Here and Hereafter*, 238.

demonstration. He who does not know Truth at sight is unworthy of her notice."[1]

5. St. John saw a beautiful world; but he looked beyond, and saw a new heaven and a new earth. What a difference in the exiles of time! Napoleon on St. Helena, fretting and fuming with disappointment, sees no bright visions. No heavens of beauty, no earths of glory pass before his enraptured gaze. St. John in Patmos makes the island glow with celestial colours. He dwells no longer in a lonely and forbidding island; he lives in a new earth adjacent to a new heaven. Columbus, after a long voyage, rejoiced to see the land birds of beautiful plumage that told of a new world near at hand. St. John, without moving from his island, saw not only the birds of beautiful plumage which sing of a new world, but also the new world itself; he rejoiced to see a sight which men had never before witnessed. St. John's vision is resplendent with material and moral beauty. The bright vision is not darkened by the sad shades of sin, pain, sorrow, death. He saw a new world of marvellous creation, of inexhaustible loveliness. The new world was to be one in which there would be day without night, land without sea, summer without winter, pleasure without pain, smiles without tears, health without sickness, joy without sorrow, life without death, love without any alloy, without any tendency to decay.

¶ The real question everywhere is whether the world, distracted and confused as everybody sees that it is, is going to be patched up and restored to what it used to be, or whether it is going forward into a quite new and different kind of life, whose exact nature nobody can pretend to foretell, but which is to be distinctly new, unlike the life of any age which the world has seen already. . . . It is impossible that the old conditions, so shaken and broken, can ever be repaired and stand just as they stood before. The time has come when something more than mere repair and restoration of the old is necessary. The old must die and a new must come forth out of its tomb.[2]

6. But if the earth as it left the hands of its Maker was "very good," what need is there for a new earth? There are some who tell us that the creation of the earth was a bad piece of bungling; that a wise Creator would not have made "nature red in tooth

[1] Arthur Symons, *William Blake*, 243. [2] Phillips Brooks.

and claw"; that He would never have allowed sin to come in and leave its foul trail in the Garden of Eden, and in all the gardens of the earth. Such people fail to understand that when God peopled the earth with men made in His own image, these men were to be co-workers with Him in making the earth what it was in God's dream of it. God sketched a picture, but He intended man to fill in the details. There is nothing wrong with the sketch: God's work was "very good"; it is the details that man should fill in that are botches and blotches on the pictures of God's conception. Is not this the teaching of the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"? The doing of God's will is the co-working with God in the completion of His picture of an earth that is "very good," that is "as Eden the Garden of God." St. John, in his Patmos vision, saw prophetically an earth that was the earth God intended it should be when His design was completed. Some day the botches and blotches will all be removed; all the stains of sin will be cleansed away; all the disfigurements due to perverted human will shall give place to the beauty of God's perfect plan, and then indeed there will be "a new earth," and yet not entirely a new earth, for it will be just the old earth which God intended, but which has never yet been realized.

¶ I find it written very distinctly that God loved the world, and that Christ is the light of it. What the much-used words, therefore, mean, I cannot tell. But this, I believe, they *should* mean. That there is, indeed, one world which is full of care, and desire, and hatred: a world of war, of which Christ is not the light, which indeed is without light, and has never heard the great "Let there be." Which is, therefore, in truth, as yet no world; but chaos, on the face of which, moving, the Spirit of God yet causes men to hope that a world will come. The better one, they call it: perhaps they might, more wisely, call it the real one. Also, I hear them speak continually of going to it, rather than of its coming to them; which, again, is strange, for in that prayer which they had straight from the lips of the Light of the world, and which He apparently thought sufficient prayer for them, there is not anything about going to another world; only something of another government coming into this; or rather, not another, but the only government,—that government which will constitute it a world indeed. New heavens and new earth. Earth, no more without form and void, but sown with fruit of

righteousness. Firmament, no more of passing cloud, but of cloud risen out of the crystal sea—cloud in which, as He was once received up, so He shall again come with power.[1]

7. St. John saw at once a new heaven and a new earth. The Scriptures are all against the unnatural separation of heaven and earth, which has been too common in vulgar thought and talk. The vulgar way of looking at it has been, earth here, heaven hereafter—which is quite unscriptural. Heaven is here to the Christian, and is, or may be, as real to him as earth. And as heaven is here as well as earth, earth will be hereafter as well as heaven. Listen to the Apostle: "And I saw a new heaven *and a new earth*." No Nirvana, no cloudland, no dreamland, no mere spirit country or cold expanse of mists for ghosts to float in, but a veritable homeland is there before us.

¶ It was round the thought of the Inner Mission that all his subsequent activities were built up. At a second conference in Nottingham, at the Jubilee of the Institute, in the last paper he wrote, indeed in all his addresses on modern church questions, he goes back to the Inner Mission as the corner-stone on which to build. Among its main principles are:

The kingdom of heaven Christ came to establish is not in the clouds, but here on earth. It exists wherever and whenever God's will is done upon earth as it is done in heaven. We have thought of the New Jerusalem as "stored up perhaps in heaven," like Plato's ideal city; but the apostle saw it "coming down from God out of heaven." There is to be a new earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness," as well as a new heaven.

To establish this kingdom is the great *business* of the Church; needing, like all human business, only in higher degree, "rigorous method, indomitable persistency, and wise application of means to ends." Silver and gold may be wanting, but heart-service, pity, willing personal help—these things, which the Lord freely gives, men should freely give. And no redemptive impulse must be stifled, or allowed to remain unused. Each varied gift, whatever it be, must be trained and used and disciplined "under wise and definite direction" in the work of the Church, which work is the establishing of the kingdom of God on earth.[2]

8. The vision of the new heaven and the new earth does not

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, pt. ix. ch. xii. § 18 (*Works*, vii. 458).

[2] *John Brown Paton*, by his Son (1914), 190.

necessarily suppose the annihilation of the old creation, but only its passing away as to its outward and recognizable form, and renewal to a fresh and more glorious one. The idea of the term "new" used by the writer of the Apocalypse in this verse is not that things present are blotted out of existence, and a new order of things quite strange, foreign, and novel is brought into being, but that the things of old are made new, raised to a higher plane, given a fresh start, free from all that has marred their beauty, and hindered their due development. While, then, the continuity is not broken, the change is very great, so great that it can be said that "the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."

Two words in the New Testament are translated "new," but there is a difference between them. The one contemplates the object spoken of under the aspect of something that has been recently brought into existence, the other under a fresh aspect given to what had previously existed, but been outworn. The latter word is employed in the text, as it is also employed in the phrases a "new garment," that is, a garment not threadbare, like an old one; "new wine-skins," that is, skins not shrivelled and dried; a "new tomb," that is, not one recently hewn out of the rock, but one which had never been used as the last resting-place of the dead. The fact, therefore, that the heavens and the earth here spoken of are "new," does not imply that they are now first brought into being. They may be the old heavens and the old earth; but they have a new aspect, a new character, adapted to a new end.

¶ Life is always opening new and unexpected things to us. There is no monotony in living to him who walks even the quietest and tamest paths with open and perceptive eyes. The monotony of life, if life is monotonous to you, is in you, not in the world. . . . It is God, and the discovery of Him in life, and the certainty that He has plans for our lives and is doing something with them, that gives us a true, deep sense of movement, and lets us always feel the power and delight of unknown coming things.[1]

> With brain o'erworn, with heart a summer clod,
> With eye so practised in each form around,—
> And all forms mean,—to glance above the ground
> Irks it, each day of many days we plod,

[1] Phillips Brooks.

Tongue-tied and deaf, along life's common road.
But suddenly, we know not how, a sound
Of living streams, an odour, a flower crowned
With dew, a lark upspringing from the sod,
And we awake. O joy and deep amaze!
Beneath the everlasting hills we stand,
We hear the voices of the morning seas,
And earnest prophesyings in the land,
While from the open heaven leans forth at gaze
The encompassing great cloud of witnesses.[1]

9. We need not be staggered by this prophecy, for science delights to show that many heavens and many earths have already passed away. As the geological world was the rough draft, or series of rough drafts, of this more beautiful and finished world on which we now gaze, so this present world is a dim foreshadowing of the ultimate spiritualized theatre of human life. There is much in nature to-day that mars its loveliness, that spoils its music; it is full of sad facts which sorely puzzle and distress reflective men; but we may confidently believe that in the ages to come these painful problems will be eliminated. The process of perfecting is ever going on, and who shall say when or where it will stop? Nature has emerged out of so many catastrophes with added glories that we are perfectly justified in once more looking beyond fire and flood for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The "new heavens" and the "new earth" shall be purified from every blot; the thing becomes, with time, more reasonable; all the splendid possibilities of the universe shall be realized; earth and sky shall cease to groan; the whole creation shall be adorned as a bride for her husband.

¶ Brotherhood, peace, glory to God in the highest, good will towards men—all are coming, fast coming. The world began with a paradise, and it shall end with one. The first was a corner of the planet; the second shall stretch

From where the rising sun salutes the morn,
To where he lays his head of glory on the rocking deep.[2]

¶ It is the hope of a new heaven and a new earth that cheers the emigrant as he comes out for the first time to Canada. "I shall find there," he says, "'a new heaven and a new earth.' I

[1] Edward Dowden.

[2] W. L. Watkinson, *The Blind Spot*, 197.

am weary of these sweating-dens in old London; I am sick to death of looking for work day after day and finding none. I shall find a 'new earth' beyond the seas. I see pictures of men like myself who went out years ago, and they are new men to-day. I will go to the granary of the world, and I shall surely find bread; I will go to the wide prairie, and I shall find space to breathe; I will leave this old land where men tread on one another's heels, and I will find this new earth which covers one-third of the British Empire, and has only as yet seven million people, and I shall surely find there 'room to live.'" And with the new earth something tells him that he may find a new heaven. It is hard to believe in God when the children cry for bread in London; but when the earth becomes new the heaven becomes new. I have known many a man in East London give his soul a fresh chance on going even to a new district outside London. In breaking loose from the old associations and the bad habits of the past, many a man looks to Canada for a "new heaven." "Old things are passed away, all things are to become new"—he gives his soul another chance. The very sound of church bells has an attraction connected with home which they did not have in the old homeland, and, unconsciously to himself, he looks for a fresh glimpse of God and a new view of eternal truth more glorious than the first sight of the Rocky Mountains.[1]

10. It is objected that the new heaven and earth is only an idea. The vision is still only a vision. The heaven looms in the distance. "All things continue as they were" (2 Pet. iii. 4). Well, the ideal has been powerful. Many a Patmos has been cheered. Many an exile has been filled with gladness. We cannot afford to lose our ideals, though they may be only ideals. But they are something more. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. iii. 13). Our faith is not shaken by seeming delays. The vision still cheers in cheerless times, and strengthens in days of weakness, so that out of weakness men have been made sublimely strong. The cheerful notes of St. John's song have rung through the world with gladness to many hearts. The earth without a heaven would be as the Arctic winter. Let the sun shine, and it will fertilize and gladden. Perpetual summer will reign, and all beauties and glories flourish.

[1] Bishop Winnington-Ingram, in *The Guardian*, Sept. 23, 1910.

¶ Well might St. John who "saw," look up and lift up his head; for however remote, his redemption, the general redemption, was drawing nigh. Meanwhile the first heaven and the first earth make up our own present lot. Of those others God giveth us not as yet so much as to set our foot on, although He promises them to us for a possession. The temporary heaven and earth above, around, beneath us, import us now, supply now things convenient for us. These we are bound to use, and by no means to misuse or neglect. And though the things which are seen be but temporal, yet a work of the Great Creator is and cannot but be so great, that I suppose neither the profoundest and most illuminated saint, nor all saints summed up together, will have exhausted the teaching of things visible, even when the hour comes for them to give place to things invisible.[1]

¶ We heard the other day of a Baptist working man, esteemed by all who knew him for the purity and elevation of his character, who died of a painful disease. In his last moments his face became suddenly irradiated. "What is it you see," asked his wife. "It must be heaven," he replied, "I see angels, the most glorious, beautiful things." And with that light on his face he passed away. "Purely subjective, of course," says the critic; "an affair of his theological prepossessions, an exhibition of his pre-existing mental furniture." Take it even at that lowest level, does it not suggest something? That a soul, in a body dying of torturing pains, finds its last earthly moment a triumph scene of gladness, its vision fed with a sense of glorious beauty; is there not here an unspoken argument for the life of faith deeper than all our philosophy, more eloquent than all our eloquence?[2]

¶ William Hazlitt said: "In the days of Jacob there was a ladder between heaven and earth; but now the heavens are gone farther off and are become astronomical." That may be our first feeling; but no, in spite of our thought of the heavens having become astronomical, even in spite of disenchanting errors, the sensitive heart, bred in Christ's school, has its own skies and mystic influences.

> And still the soul a far-off glory sees,
> Strange music hears.
> A something, not of earth, still haunts the breeze,
> The sun and spheres.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 477.
[2] J. Brierley, *Religion and To-Day*, 45.

All things that be, all thought, all love, all joy
Spell-bind the man
As once the growing boy,
And point afar—

Point to some land of hope and crystal truth,
Of life and light,
Where souls renewed in an immortal youth
Shall know the infinite.

That ladder has ceased to be astronomical and has become flesh. The ascending and descending blessings and communications linking heaven with our hearts are now "upon the Son of Man"; by Him come down those white thoughts and forces of grace which prove God near, and by Him we climb to God's feet. You cannot throw off the leash of His Spirit.[1]

[1] R. E. Welsh, *Man to Man*, 42.

No More Sea.

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No More Sea.

And the sea is no more.—Rev. xxi. 1.

1. We love the sea. A preacher who spent his holiday in Braemar, writes enthusiastically of its frowning mountains, the silver streak of its beautiful river, the inspiration of its bracing air. But it lacked one thing. There was no glimpse to be had of the sea.

¶ There is a most charming passage in the *Life of Gladstone* where Mr. Morley is recalling the talks at Biarritz during the very last years, in which he tells of the old man's passionate delight in the buoyant breakers thundering home on the reefs. He felt as if he could hardly bear to live without the sound of the sea in his ears. He had, indeed, that within him which beat in response to that tumult of waters, to that titanic pulse of the Atlantic. But he had in him a note of something deeper still. Not in tumultuous buoyancy, not in passionate upheaval, lay the secret of his primal powers. Rather you felt in him, behind and beyond this energy of elemental vitality, the spirit of the serious athlete, in possession of his soul, disciplined in austerity, secure of a peace that passeth understanding, held fast, in hidden calm, by the vision of a quiet land in which there is no more sea.[1]

¶ I lie in my niche under the stunted hawthorn watching the to and fro of the sea, and Æolus shepherding his white sheep across the blue. I love the sea with its impenetrable fathoms, its wash and undertow, and rasp of shingle sucked anew. I love it for its secret dead in the Caverns of Peace, of which account must be given when the books are opened and earth and heaven have fled away. Yet in my love there is a paradox, for as I watch the restless, ineffective waves I think of the measureless, reflective depths of the still and silent Sea of Glass, of the dead, small and great, rich or poor, with the works which follow them, and of the Voice as the voice of many waters, when the multitude of one mind rends heaven with alleluia: and I lie so still that I almost feel the kiss of White Peace on my mouth.[2]

[1] H. S. Holland, *Personal Studies*, 45.

[2] Michael Fairless, *The Roadmender* (ed. 1911), 9.

¶ A little girl friend of mine, whose home was by one of the great sea-lochs of the West Highlands, was being taught about heaven by her mother, and was told that there would be no sea. "Then," she said, "I shall not like it." All the child's pleasures nearly were associated with the sea—bathing, fishing, boating. On that changeful coast what is one hour mist and dulness and gloom, grey rock and wan water, is the next a fairyland of lights and colours most strange and beautiful, on which to look is enough delight. All island and peninsular nations are lovers of the sea. When Xenophon's Greeks, retreating after the battle of Cunaxa, came, after long desert marches and conflicts, in sight of the Black Sea, they burst out into joyous cries—"Thalassa! Thalassa!" A modern poet has expressed the strange fascination that the sea has for the men of these isles, in spite of all its fickleness and changes, thus:

"Ye that bore us, O restore us!
She is kinder than ye;
For the call is on our heart-strings,"
Said the men of the sea.

"Ye that love us, can ye move us?
She is dearer than ye;
And your sleep will be the sweeter,"
Said the men of the sea.

"Oh, our fathers in the churchyard,
She is older than ye;
And our graves will be the greener,"
Said the men of the sea.

¶ The sea is our life's symbol, the port for which we sail, that heaven on which our hearts are set, and "we are as near heaven by sea as by land." Because we are a maritime people we symbolize the ultimate, to which we go, as a royal port. It is a simple affair to us to consider all our aids for the journey in terms of the voyage. Thus does Religion use the sea for its purpose, and it seems natural that it should do so when we remember that, in the region of fact as well as in that of imagination, Religion has used the sea. And it seems a natural use, for when a man's mind is exercised by the highest emotions at the same time that he is about to contend with the dangers of a natural element, it is easy to believe that, from that moment, the association between emotion and element becomes for ever established in his mind, and in the mind of his kind, and that so deep

is the impression made by the element that it becomes his symbol nearest at hand for the struggles in relation to which the emotions are aroused. In such manner may old thinkers have written, their mind in both worlds. And when we use a symbol such as this we do not draw a firm line between emotion and element. An earthly voyage may also signify a heavenly.[1]

2. But the sea did not appeal to the Israelites. They never were sailors. In the only period of their history in which they did much voyaging their ships were manned by Phœnicians—"shipmen that had knowledge of the sea." And St. John had special reasons for disliking it. We know that he took no merely material interest in the future, and that when he says "the sea was no more," he was drawing no map of the geography of the new heaven and the new earth. But he had his reasons for choosing the symbol of the sea, for using it as a figure of the things which were to be absent from the world of the redeemed. We shall find his reasons if we consider what the sea stood for to the Apostle.

(1) *Mystery.*—It is largely a mystery still. It is largely unfathomed and unknown. It is our great undiscovered continent.

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear.

It is itself a mystery. Says Jefferies: "There is an infinite possibility about the sea; it may do what it is not recorded to have done. It is not to be ordered. It may overleap the bounds human observation has fixed for it. It has potency unfathomable. There is still something in it not quite grasped and understood—something still to be discovered—a mystery."

This aspect of the sea impressed itself upon the Israelites. "Thy way," says the Psalmist, "was in the sea, and thy paths in the great waters, and thy footsteps were not known." And so Cowper:

> God moves in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform;
> He plants His footsteps in the sea,
> And rides upon the storm.

[1] Frank Elias, *Heaven and the Sea*, 6.

The mystery of the sea is a figure of the mystery of life. It is an aspect of life that appeals to every one. "This world," said Charles Dickens, "is a world of sacred and solemn mystery; let no man despise it or take it lightly." Christina Rossetti sings:

The mystery of Life, the mystery
Of Death I see
Darkly, as in a glass;
Their shadows pass,
And talk with me.

The prophets have felt the mystery of life more than all others; and St. John was a prophet. Often had he prayed with Job, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" Then Jesus came and called him. The mystery of the past, of the present, of the future—all the mystery of life was dispelled. He knew that in the redeemed world there would be no baffling questions remaining. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."

¶ The sea is the emblem of mystery, and each wave unfolding itself from its bosom seems about to tell the secret. But it falls back, and man cannot catch its whispers; "the sea saith, It is not in me." But the time is coming when the ocean of mystery shall open its breast and "the sea give up its dead."[1]

Heaven overarches earth and sea,
Earth-sadness and sea-bitterness.
Heaven overarches you and me:
A little while and we shall be—
Please God—where there is no more sea
Nor barren wilderness.

Heaven overarches you and me,
And all earth's gardens and her graves.
Look up with me, until we see
The day break and the shadows flee.
What though to-night wrecks you and me
If so to-morrow saves?[2]

(2) *Treachery.*—The Israelites were struck with the restlessness of the sea. But its restlessness suggested purpose. It was

[1] John Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 119.
[2] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poetical Works*, 286.

uncertain. It could not be counted upon. There was something akin to treachery in its moods. "It is the scene," says Dr. Macmillan,[1] "alternately of the softest dalliance, and the fiercest rage of the elements. Now it lies calm and motionless as an inland lake—without a ripple on its bosom—blue as the sapphire sky above—golden with the reflexion of sunset clouds—silvery with the pale mystic light of moon and stars; and now it tosses its wild billows mountains high, and riots in the fury of the storm. One day it steals softly up the shore, kissing the shells and pebbles with a gentle sigh as though they were gifts of love; the next it dashes its white-crested waves, laden with wrecks and corpses, against the iron rocks. Treacherous and deceitful it lures the mariner on by its beauty, until completely in its power; and then it rises up suddenly in fury, and with an overflowing flood carries him away."

"You can domesticate mountains," says Oliver Wendell Holmes,[2] "but the sea is *ferœ naturœ*. It is feline. It licks your feet—its huge flanks purr very pleasantly for you, but it will crack your bones and eat you, for all that, and wipe the crimsoned foam from its jaws as if nothing had happened."

St. John had had experience of the treachery of the sea in the early days of his manhood on the Sea of Galilee. And now as he looked back upon his life, what had the outward circumstances of it been but a sea of uncertainty, and even of treachery? But the redeemed have sought and found a kingdom that cannot be moved. They have come to a city that hath foundations. In the New Earth the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

¶ "You're quite a sailor, I suppose?" I said to Em'ly.

"No," replied Em'ly, shaking her head, "I'm afraid of the sea."

"Afraid!" I said, with a becoming air of boldness, and looking very big at the mighty ocean. "I an't!"

"Ah! but it's cruel," said Em'ly; "I have seen it very cruel to some of our men. I have seen it tear a boat as big as our house all to pieces."

"I hope it wasn't the boat that——"

"That father was drownded in?" said Em'ly. "No. Not that one; I never see that boat."

[1] *Bible Teachings in Nature*, 303.

[2] *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.*

"Nor him?" I asked her.
Little Em'ly shook her head. "Not to remember!"[1]

¶ I remember once talking with a fisherwoman who had lost her husband and two sons at sea, away down in Cullercoats Bay on the Northumberland coast. I asked her what she liked most to think about when she thought about the land beyond, and I was not surprised to hear her say, "And there shall be no more sea."[2]

I have desired to go
Where Springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail,
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.[3]

(3) *Separation.*—This, we may be sure, was the chief thought in the mind of St. John as he stood on some rock in the little lonely isle of Patmos and looked out across the sea. His eye was toward Jerusalem. For he was an Israelite with an Israelite's love of Mount Zion, the place where God delights to dwell. The sea was the symbol of separation and exile. In Christ he had learned the meaning of the word *philadelphia*, "brotherly love." He loved the brethren, fulfilling the New Commandment: "that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." And the sea now separated him from them. In the New World there will be no sea of separation. All will be one, and all will be together. Different as are our thoughts of the sea from St. John's thoughts, we are one with him regarding the pain of separation, let the separation be caused by sea or land, by life or death.

¶ On that day, on that lovely 6th of April, such as I have described it,—that 6th of April, about nine o'clock in the morning,—we were seated at breakfast near the open window—we, that is, Agnes, myself, and little Francis. The freshness of morning spirits rested upon us; the golden light of the morning sun illuminated the room; incense was floating through the air from the gorgeous

[1] Dickens, *David Copperfield*, chap. iii.
[2] J. H. Jowett, *The Silver Lining*, 221.
[3] Gerard Hopkins.

flowers within and without the house. There in youthful happiness we sat gathered together, a family of love; and there we never sat again. Never again were we three gathered together, nor ever shall be, so long as the sun and its golden light, the morning and the evening, the earth and its flowers, endure.[1]

¶ On 18th May 1826, a couple of days after the death of his wife at Abbotsford, Sir Walter Scott writes in his diary: "Another day, and a bright one to the external world, again opens on us; the air soft, and the flowers smiling, and the leaves glittering. They cannot refresh her to whom mild weather was a natural enjoyment. Cerements of lead and of wood already hold her; cold earth must have her soon. But it is not my Charlotte, it is not the bride of my youth, the mother of my children, that will be laid among the ruins of Dryburgh, which we have so often visited in gaiety and pastime. No, no. She is sentient and conscious of my emotions somewhere—somehow; *where* we cannot tell; *how* we cannot tell; yet would I not at this moment renounce the mysterious yet certain hope that I shall see her in a better world, for all that this world can give me. The necessity of this separation,—that necessity which rendered it even a relief,—that and patience must be my comfort."[2]

¶ In a letter to Mrs. Lydia M. Child, thanking her for her book *Looking Towards Sunset*—a book which he regrets that his sister, then lately dead, never saw, Whittier writes: "How strange and terrible are these separations—this utter silence—this deep agony of mystery—this reaching out for the love which we feel must be ever living, but which gives us no sign! Ah, my friend! What is there for us but to hold faster and firmer our faith in the goodness of God? that all which He allots to us or our friends is for the best!—best for them, for us, for all. Let theology, and hate, and bigotry, talk as they will, I for one will hold fast to this, God *is* good; He *is* our Father! He knows what love is, what our hearts, sore and bereaved, long for, and He will not leave us comfortless, for is He not Love?"[3]

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

[1] De Quincey, *The Household Wreck*.
[2] *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* (ed. 1891), 194.
[3] *Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, ii. 485.

But when the moon their hollows lights,
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour—

Oh! then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent!
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our marges meet again!

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?—
A God, a God their severance ruled!
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.[1]

[1] Matthew Arnold, *To Marguerite.*

God's New World.

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God's New World.

And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.—Rev. xxi. 5.

In this chapter of Revelation, we are at length in still waters. We have read of trials and judgments; we have read of foes and battles; we have read of sorrows of the righteous and triumphs of the ungodly. Shall there be no end of these things? no end of this state of imperfection, of warfare, of unrest? no end of these vicissitudes and alternations, of these inversions of right and wrong, of these perpetual renewals of a strife once decided? Yes, out of the ruin of the old world there rise a fresh heaven and a fresh earth. The Holy City is now seen descending from the hands of its Builder and Maker, prepared "as a bride adorned for her husband." The voice of one of the angels is then heard, proclaiming, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with man, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them"—the full realization of the prophetic name, Immanuel, God with us, bestowed upon our Lord (Matt. i. 23)—their God. "And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more; the first things [that belonged to the old order, the fashion of this world] are passed away."

Then for the first time St. John hears God the Father speak: "Behold, I make all things new" (fresh). It is the voice of the Throned One, the One who rules over all things from the beginning, and who has presided over all the changing scenes of earth's history; it is He who makes even the wrath of man to praise Him, and who causes all things to work together for good to them that love Him, who gives this heart-helping assurance. "I am making all things new." In spite of all the moral disorder, the pain and grief, the dark shadows of life and history, the new creation is being prepared, and will rise, like the early creation, out of chaos.

i. The Speaker.

1. The Speaker is God the Father. Throughout the whole Book of Revelation, says Swete, "he that sitteth on the throne" is the Almighty Father, as distinguished from the Incarnate Son. And so it is probable that here for the first time in the book we listen to the words of God Himself, for it is the first time that "he that sitteth on the throne" is represented as speaking. His words go to the centre of things and reach to their circumference, and they are gracious in their purpose: "Behold, I make all things new."

2. Is there a difficulty in the representation of the Father as Judge supreme? The doctrine seems to join issue with John. v. 22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son"; and indeed with the whole current of early Christian tradition. Swete finds a possible reconciliation of the two views in the oneness of the Father and the Son (John x. 30)—when the Son acts, the Father acts with and through Him (John v. 19). St. Paul speaks of the judgment-seat of Christ (2 Cor. v. 10), and also of the judgment-seat of God (Rom. xiv. 10).

¶ It would seem as if the threefold Personality had become united in one name. No more we hear of "Let *us* make"; we are now confronted by an intenser term, "Behold, *I* make all things new." It would seem as if each Person in the Divine Trinity had times of special expression and times of special relation to nature and to man and to providence and to destiny; now it is the Father, and the other Persons of the Trinity are concealed, as it were, behind His glory: now it is the Son, the only-begotten Son, the Saviour of the world; and, finally, it is the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, who rules the whole mystery of human development. And what if now the Three should in a peculiar and definite sense be One—as if the Three-One should all be speaking in, "Behold, I make all things new"?[1]

ii. The Place of the Promise.

There are three texts which should be taken together:

"And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. i. 31).

[1] Joseph Parker.

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together (R.V. marg. "with us") until now" (Rom. viii. 22).

"And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. xxi. 5).

God's world is the subject of these three verses. The first describes God's world as it was; the second, God's world as it is; the third, God's world as it shall be.

1. *God's world as it was when He made it.*—The report of it is—and it is God's own report—that it was very good. It could not be improved. It was perfect. God's eye saw no flaw in it, God was satisfied and delighted with it. It was all glory and beauty, music and song, happiness and peace. The Greek word for "world" contains the idea of order. Nothing was out of place in God's world. But the word "very good" has more than a material and more than an artistic meaning. It is a moral word. It means that there was a contrast between the world as God made it and the world as it afterwards became. It means that there was no sin in God's world as He made it.

2. *God's world as it is.*—It is no longer very good. Ichabod is written across the face of it. Its glory has departed. Not that the primal order has become pure chaos. God "in His heaven" has been working in the world from the beginning until now. Wherever His hand is not interfered with by the will of man there is order still. Nature is even continually restoring the beauty that man has defaced. It is the moral world and all that depends upon it, the sphere in which the will of man works, that has suffered an eclipse. For sin has entered, and with sin death: the first a murder, the last a suicide. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people" (Jer. ix. 1). "God's in His heaven"; but it is prophecy, not history, to say "All's right with the world."

3. *God's world as it shall be.*—The first thing is that God is to come down and dwell in it. His tabernacle is with men, and He will dwell with them. The next thing is that He will recognize, and be recognized by, His people. They shall be His people, and

God Himself shall be with them and be their God. And the third thing is that death and sorrow and pain shall be no more. And how is it that these three things are brought to pass? They are brought to pass through "the blood of the Lamb." There has been a sacrifice made for sin and uncleanness, and the sacrifice has taken away sin. When Christ said, "It is finished," He made an end of sin, and opened the way for God to dwell among men, opened the way for their reconciliation and fellowship, for the removal of all the things that follow in the path of sin.

¶ I have seen a stream sink down into the tiniest volume, and I have seen it trailing through the mud in disgrace; and then, far away on the mountain range, clouds gathered and burst, and it was not many hours before the stream came down with the first wave six feet high, and the banks were full of sweet, clean, rejoicing water before the evening. So did Christ come in to this poor human race, and behold the veins have swollen again, not with unclean blood. We can stand and say to the tempted man, Christ died on the cross to conquer sin, and He sits on God's right hand to administer the effects of His victory. And we can tell the chief of sinners through Christ he can be made a new creation.[1]

¶ Thou sayest: "Behold, I make all things new": Good Lord, renew us to fresh powers of loving Thee in the joy of Thine unveiled Presence. Yet to each of us be Thou the Same, and be each soul to Thee the same: say Thou, "It is I," and give each of us grace to answer, It is I. Amen.

New creatures; the Creator still the Same
  For ever and for ever: therefore we
  Win hope from God's unsearchable decree
And glorify His still unchanging Name.
We too are still the same: and still our claim,
  Our trust, our stay, is Jesus, none but He:
  He still the Same regards us, and still we
Mount toward Him in old love's accustomed flame.
We know Thy wounded Hands: and Thou dost know
  Our praying hands, our hands that clasp and cling
To hold Thee fast and not to let Thee go.
  All else be new then, Lord, as Thou hast said:
  Since it is Thou, we dare not be afraid,
Our King of old and still our Self-same King.[2]

[1] John Watson. [2] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 487.

iii. Newness not Novelty.

It is not a new world; it is the old world made new. It is not creation; it is redemption. God has not destroyed the world, to begin again; He has renewed the inhabitants of the old world in the spirit of their minds.

There are two words in the original which are necessarily translated alike—"new"—in our versions. Of these two adjectives, one signifies *new* in relation to *time* (νέος), the other *new* in relation to *quality* (καινός)—the first temporal novelty, the second newness intellectual or spiritual. The first indicates that which is young, recent in time; the other not only that which succeeds something else in time, but that which in idea springs out of it, and not only succeeds but supersedes it.

So this word, "I make all things new," is not the announcement of a perfectly new thing; it does not proclaim an act at that moment done; it is not an exercise, as it were, of instantaneous Omnipotence. This is the completing and the perfecting, rather, of the work of the long ages, the seal of a mighty progression, the top-stone of the great temple, the finishing of the work of the Sabbath of God from the periods of the First Creation.

¶ To make things new is not the same as to make new things. To make new things is the work of the hand; to make things new is the work of the heart. Whenever one sits upon the throne of the heart, all things are made new. They are made so without changing a line, without altering a feature. Enthrone in your heart an object of love, and you have renewed the universe. You have given an added note to every bird, a fresh joy to every brook, a fairer tint to every flower.[1]

¶ We now come to the year which was, to her, the epoch, the turning-point of her career. On the night of March 7th, 1838, came the moment of moments. "I got up, that morning, one creature," she herself often said; "I went to bed another creature. I had found my power!" And, all through her life, she kept the 7th of March, with a religious solemnity; she would ask to have herself remembered on it with prayers; she treated it as a second birthday. And rightly; for, on that day, she woke to herself; she became artistically alive; she felt the inspiration, and won the sway, which she now knew it was given her, to have and to hold.[2]

[1] G. Matheson, *Times of Retirement*, 92.

[2] H. S. Holland and W. S. Rockstro, *Jenny Lind the Artist*, i. 55.

iv. The Evidence of the Newness.

1. The first evidence will be *the death-blow of evil.*—What are the present evils under which the creation groans and travails? Suffering is one. It is Stoicism, not Christianity, that says suffering is no evil. Sickness and weakness are evils; feebleness of hand and step; toil and want; old age, solitary and begrudged and despised; sorrow and crying, not to be comforted because the loved one is not. All these things will depart on that day, because that will be the execution-day of sin.

¶ If the end of Providence were to secure this race in a garden of Eden, lapped round with comfort where no one should ever taste hunger or pain or loss, then let it be freely granted that this world is a conspicuous failure. It is so badly arranged and so loosely governed that it would bring scandal on a human monarch. Things are so much out of joint that we are obliged to seek for another working theory of life than the garden one, and we find it in the New Testament. Jesus and His Apostles teach that the supreme success of life is not to escape pain but to lay hold on righteousness, not to possess but to be holy, not to get things from God but to be like God. They were ever bidding Christians beware of ease, ever rousing them to surrender and sacrifice. They never complained of their own hard lot, but rather considered that it was gain. Winds blowing off the snow breed hardy men, and fierce seas breaking on rocky coasts make skilful seamen; and if the mind of God was to compel this race up the arduous road that leads to perfection, our dark experience is an open secret.[1]

2. The second evidence of the renovation will be *the re-instalment of God.*—The Seer saw no temple therein. Why? Because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. He saw no sun. Why? Because the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. What is the occasion of sickness? It is because the Healer is absent from the earth. Of Death? Because the Life-giver is not at hand. Of loneliness? Because sin has taken away our Lord. But thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

¶ Do we not believe in the mission of the Christ on earth? Do we not believe that the Kingdom of God can come, and His

[1] John Watson, *The Potter's Wheel*, 134.

will be done, on earth? It was just this that our Lord taught to be saving faith. His offer of salvation was conditioned; it depended on a corporate repentance from all acquiescence in evil, a joyous corporate expectation of the perfect good. It is this joyous expectation that ought to be embodied in all our creeds. It is this faith that the Kingdom of Love is at hand that we should be reciting at all our formal worship. It is by this faith, and by this faith alone, that we can accept the full salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ which has been so often rejected.

The revelation of the Gospel, if we judge of it by its main drift and most salient characteristics, was certainly to declare God's intention of bringing about a renovated earth—to proclaim that it was to come, not by coercion, but by the power of love; not by God without man, but by God within man, who is able

"To accomplish all—more than all things,
Far transcending all our prayers, all our imaginings,
To an extent whose measure is that mighty impulse which thrills us through" (Eph. iii. 20, Way's translation).

Loving-kindness springs naturally from this realization of God's love and power; and the strength of man's corporate impulse of faith and loving-kindness is the measure of God's power on earth.[1]

v. The Results of the Newness.

1. *The "far-off" is brought nigh.*—He who was a stranger to God becomes a child in his Father's house, an heir of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. When John Wesley was dying, in a brief moment of returning consciousness, he asked, "What was the text that I preached upon last Sunday?" And when one standing beside him repeated, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich," he exclaimed, "Yes, that is it. There is no other."

¶ In the supreme and central fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the great utterance, "Behold, I make all things new," finds its typical fulfilment. It is the verity and the hope of the Resurrection that strikes the keynote of the New Testament: the idea of renewal, of a new beginning, of a new spiritual impulse. The latest book of the Old Testament, Ecclesiastes, sums up the experience of humanity before the Saviour's

[1] *The Practice of Christianity*, 111.

coming: "The thing that hath been it is that which shall be, and there is no new thing under the sun." But with the Resurrection on the third day old things passed for ever away. Jesus risen is the one essentially new thing in the world. He is our hope for the future: our well-spring of life and energy and gladness. Fast bound in misery and iron, humanity has "an eye unto him" and is "lightened." To Him as the risen Saviour and Revealer of God, it can lift the Psalmist's cry, "All my fresh springs shall be in thee." So the last book of the New Testament closes with the vision of the holy city, "New Jerusalem," coming down from God out of heaven. Here then is the keynote of our faith; a new doctrine, a new covenant, a new commandment, new wine in new bottles, a new name, a new creation, a new man, a new song, a new heaven and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness: all things *new*.[1]

2. *Bitterness is turned into blessing.*—A wonderful sentence comes to us from the Middle Ages. Out of the turmoil, the vice and the bloodshed of the Florence of that day, we hear the voice of the great poet as he says in his immortal words: "In sua voluntade è nostra pace" ("In the doing of His will lies our peace"). How did Dante know that? Has any thought risen higher than that through all the centuries? In the doing of God's will, the surrendering of ourselves to His appointment, the accepting of the cup because He sent it, is not only the discipline we need, not only the promise of strength and attainment, but, far more than this, the deep abiding Divine peace of the soul.

¶ I know no more intellectually of the *Truth* than when I first believed; but what a result comes from its abiding! A deeper, deeper happiness absorbs the heart and pervades the soul. A deepening calm rules and assimilates the faculties, and compels them into action; not excitement, but definite and proper action. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, which baffles analysis, which has an infinitude of depth about it. As you cannot understand remote stars, nor the everchanging vault which you cannot at all explore, but can only feel as you feel your life, so you cannot touch this Peace of God with your understanding. It lies round you like an atmosphere. It dwells in you like a fragrance. It goes from you like a subtle elixir vitæ. "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the

[1] R. L. Ottley, *The Rule of Faith and Hope*, 71.

world giveth give I unto you." May God double to you His peace.[1]

It is a rest that deeper grows
In midst of pain and strife;
A mighty, conscious, willed repose,
The death of deepest life.
To have and hold the precious prize
No need of jealous bars;
But windows open to the skies,
And skill to read the stars!

Who dwelleth in that secret place,
Where tumult enters not,
Is never cold with terror base,
Never with anger hot.
For if an evil host should dare
His very heart invest,
God is his deeper heart, and there
He enters into rest.

When mighty sea-winds madly blow,
And tear the scattered waves,
Peaceful as summer woods, below
Lie darkling ocean caves:
The winds of words may toss my heart,
But what is that to me!
'Tis but a surface storm—thou art
My deep, still, resting sea.[2]

3. *The unproductive has become fruitful.*—The promise is, "Ye shall bear much fruit." This is to be the measure and the reward of true discipleship. This is Christ's reward. This is how He is to see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. There is that in every heart which responds to this thought. We can all understand something of the feeling of the farmer leaning on his gate and looking at the waving fields of grain about him. He has planted and cultivated, and waited for the harvest, and here it is. He has made the waste land fruitful, and his soul is filled with a supreme satisfaction. Look at the light in the face of the young father over his new-born child, or the joy of the mother as for the

[1] *Letters of James Smetham*, 81.
[2] George MacDonald, *Poetical Works*, i. 294.

first time she presses her infant to her heart. Life has produced life. Fruitfulness has come, the blessed gift of God. We all know its significance; even the dullest and weariest long for its privileges.

¶ Sir Wilfrid Lawson the elder (father of the late baronet), on reaching middle life, had a dangerous illness; and when brought (as he thought) to death's door, and when the unseen realities of the eternal world seemed breaking upon him, he longed for religious instruction, guidance, and consolation. This he did not expect to find among the worldly or sporting parsons of the neighbouring parishes, and so he sent for a humble Presbyterian minister from the neighbouring hamlet of Blennerhasset—a Mr. Walton—who, by his instructions and prayers, by God's blessing, brought peace of mind to Sir Wilfrid, so that when he rose from his sick-bed it was with a new view of life and a new purpose in living. In a word, he had become a true earnest Christian upon personal inquiry and conviction, and his tastes and inclinations and aims were completely changed, and he determined henceforth to spread those views of truth that had changed and blessed him, by devoting time and thought and means to their diffusion among his neighbours and friends. Having obtained a peace of mind never known before, he was anxious that those around should share the same priceless treasure. The Scriptures were a new revelation to him, and with strong faith in Jesus Christ as a loving, ever-present Saviour, he felt constrained by example and word and walk to lead others to trust in and serve Him.[1]

vi. The Extent of it.

The words of the Seer are suggested by Is. xliii. 18, 19: "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing." But, says Swete, the scope of the old prophecy is enlarged indefinitely by the words "all things." All the fruits of the New Covenant are included.

1. *Man is included.*—The new world begins in the human heart, and it occupies every part of the personality and every aspect of the life. By his words a man is now justified. His thoughts are brought into captivity to the mind of Christ. Moreover, the newness covers the relation between man and man. There will be the fulfilment of both commandments—the first and greater, and also the second which is like unto it.

[1] G. W. E. Russell, *Life of Sir Wilfrid Lawson*, 3.

2. *The whole creation is included.*—For "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Change the man, and you change his world. The new self will make all around it as good as new, though no actual change should pass on it; for, to a very wonderful extent, a man creates his own world. We project the hue of our own spirit on things outside. A bright and cheerful temper sees all things on their sunny side. A weary, uneasy mind drapes the very earth in gloom. Lift from a man his load of inward anxiety, and you change the aspect of the universe to that man; for, if "to the pure all things are pure," it is no less true that to the happy all things are happy.

¶ For to those in Christ all things are not only new, but they are growing continually newer. In the old world, and with the old man, it is just the other way. Things are always getting older, until life gets to be an insufferable burden, a dreary round, a wretched repetition, and we see backs bent with nothing but pure sorrow, and heads white with none other sickness than vexation of spirit, and men brought to the grave because life was too wearisome, and time too intolerable, and existence too aimless and stale, to be supported any longer. But in the new world, and with the new man, the whole is reversed; and the new cry ever waxes more frequent and more loud, "Look, and look again, how the old is passing, how the new is coming, how things are getting new." Every day more of the old is weeded out, more of the new is coming in. Life is "fresher and freer" and fuller of promise. There are new discoveries of the Father's love, new revelations of Christ's grace, new experiences of the Spirit's comfort. Life becomes interesting, and entertaining, and significant, and splendid, and grand beyond belief. What views of life Christ's world contains; what heavens of expansion overarch it; what hills of attainment are reared upon it; what distances of outlook are discernible from it! Yourself, Christ, God—what thoughts about them all you could never have conceived before! History, Time, Eternity—what feelings they stir in you, you never could have felt before! Purpose, Progress, Achievement—what mighty motions of the will they produce![1]

¶ Dr. S. Reynolds Turner, who superintends a Chinese colporteur in Amoy, writes: "He is one of the most earnest Christians I have met in China, and a real red-hot evangelist. In visiting our stations I have seen a good deal of him on his native heath, and one remark he made sticks to me, since it was so

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 130.

strange from a Chinaman. We were standing on a hillside overlooking the sea, which at that part of the coast is dotted over with islands, and I was revelling in the beauty of the scene under a bright sun and clear skies. Suddenly he turned to me, and said, 'Isn't it beautiful?' I agreed heartily, but added that I thought Chinamen did not, as a rule, pay attention to such things. 'Ah!' he said, 'I never saw anything about me, or thought anything beautiful or worth looking at, until I became a Christian; but since then the world gets daily more beautiful, and the more I see of it the more I comprehend our dear Father in heaven.'"[1]

¶ I remember, as though it were yesterday, something that happened in my own life at least thirty-seven years ago. I was a boy, and there came to my father's house a young man who had been brought to Christ in some services my father had been conducting away up among the Welsh hills. This young man one day was out in our garden, and talking to me about all sorts of things. He interested me as a child, and I loved him. Suddenly he stooped down and took a leaf from a nasturtium plant, put it on his hand, and said to me, "Did you ever see anything so beautiful?" And I looked, and saw all the veins, and the exquisite beauty of it all. Then he said, "Do you know, I never saw how beautiful that leaf was until six months ago, when I gave myself to Christ?" I have never forgotten that. How true I know that to be in my own experience![2]

[1] *Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, 1906.
[2] G. Campbell Morgan, in *The British Weekly*.

The Citizens of the City.

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The Citizens of the City.

And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.—Rev. xxi. 27.

1. The New Jerusalem, as seen in the vision of the Book of Revelation, is a city differing in many respects from cities in the modern world. There is no night there, no curse, no temple. It is to be, not, as are many modern cities, for the troubling of the nation, but for its healing. It is to be the source of light and health and glory to all mankind. There is no relapse into heathenism or barbarism, no dark ages yet to come. The new city has an eternal day. The light of God's Presence never wavers. The translucent buildings and walls transmit all the light of life that is concentrated in her to the nations and peoples without. Her gates are ever open—everything that is of value, every talent, every power, every gift in the sum of human perfections is concentrated here to the Divine service. All the nations offer their glory and honour, not as captives robbed of their freedom, and despoiled of their treasures in a Roman triumph, but as free and loving subjects, as those who hate falsehood and immorality, and order their conduct in obedience to the laws that bind the citizens of the kingdom of the Lamb.

2. This ideal city which St. John depicts is not heaven, except in so far as heaven is already latent in the earth and shall finally be realized in it. The indications of the path of interpretation are clear. The ideal city is the Holy Jerusalem, and stands in contrast to the great city Babylon. Whether we take them separately, or oppose them to one another, their meaning is obvious. It is certainly not heaven and hell that they represent, but rather the forces and dominions upon earth of good and evil. Jerusalem represents here, as it does in ancient prophecy—upon which the pictures of this book are almost entirely based—the people of God

upon earth, in their holy character and their organized force. If there were any doubt of this, the added picture of "the bride, the Lamb's wife," would remove all uncertainty. For, whether we turn to the Old Testament or to the New, the metaphor is consistently applied to the covenant people of God. The ideal city, therefore, represents the Church of Christ in its ideal meaning and its ideal attainment. It is not a "jeweller's shop," as some have called it in supercilious and ignorant scorn. It is a symbolic picture of the spiritual power and grandeur which God has destined for the earth.

3. The text speaks of its citizens. And it tells us that there is nothing but moral disability that excludes from citizenship, as there is nothing but moral power that can entitle to its privileges. It is not the wise and the prudent, the opulent and the mighty, that have a right to the seats of the blessed in the City of Life. No key of gold can open the gates of the New Jerusalem, or secure an entrance therein. For the strong angel at the gate esteems the riches and the honours of men as nothing and less than nothing. But the gates are ever open to the pure in heart, and the angel knows no title to the glory of the city except the title of the pure. Only "they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" can find that holiness of spirit which shall admit men through the gates of the city of God.

I.

Those who may not Enter.

"There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie."

1. The first description of those who may not enter the city of God involves simply the assertion of moral unsoundness. Herein lies the germ of all the possible developments of sin. In the words, "anything unclean," the reference is to the blemish that detracts from perfect soundness, to the defiling characteristics that distinguish the unclean from the clean, the common from the holy. This moral unsoundness is the elementary fact in the history and progress of sin, and a universal fact in human experi-

ence. Whatever controversies may be raised concerning total and partial depravity in the beginning of human life, the universal sweep of moral unsoundness in our race is patent enough to every unprejudiced observer. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity" may be boldly taken as a generalization, and applied to every member of the human family. Such defilement cannot enter into the gates of the eternal city. The "unclean" are for ever the denizens of darkness, and the gates of the city of light give no pathway for their feet.

(1) The margin of the Revised Version tells us that the word translated "unclean" literally means "common." "Common," *i.e.*, shared by other nations, was often used by the Jews in a depreciatory sense. Thus they found fault with the disciples of Jesus for eating food with "common," *i.e.*, unwashed, hands. Our word "vulgar" has much the same sort of depreciatory meaning, and it would have been such an exact rendering in this passage from the Revelation that one feels at first inclined to regret that our translators did not adopt it. But they were clearly right. To have said that nothing vulgar could enter the heavenly city would have given an opening to serious misconstruction. A strange vision of a heaven restricted to the world of rank and fashion might have presented itself to people who identify vulgarity with the working classes—to the kind of people who think that it is vulgar to be poor, and vulgar not to dress for dinner. Yet there the word stands, "common," "vulgar" (κοινόν). In the Authorized Version the rendering is "anything that defileth" (κοινοῦν). But this is an alteration by later copyists. Originally, there is no doubt, the writer wrote, "There shall in no wise enter anything that is common, anything that is vulgar." The text, then, may be taken as suggesting that there is sometimes to be found in human nature a certain kind of commonness of character, a certain type of vulgarity, which is insufferable in the sight of God, so insufferable that it cannot be admitted into His presence. Whenever it predominates in any human soul, that soul cannot enter into the heavenly city.

(2) It is the egotistic element in our human nature that we cannot even imagine ourselves as bringing into the presence of God. The vulgar person in any rank, from the nobleman to the labourer, is one whose whole interests centre in himself, who is

unconscious of the feelings of others, lacking all the delicate sympathies and sensibilities of the gentler nature. One who pushes and tramples, and not only that, but one who is simply obtuse and callous, has in him the root of vulgarity. And this dulness of perception is met with equally in all ranks. Now this egotism, which we recognize as the root of vulgarity, is precisely what we must lay aside on entering God's presence. He giveth grace to the humble; to follow Christ it is needful to deny or suppress oneself; it is the meek and the modest that alone can realize God's presence. All purse-proud, or intellect-proud, or success-proud characters—in fact, all egotisms are alike condemned by our instinct as vulgar, and by our conscience as incapable of entering into the Kingdom of God.

(3) There is often an inherent vulgarity in sin, which we must shut utterly out of our lives, if our heart is to be in communion with Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Vulgarity, it is true, is not exactly the same thing as sin. It is sin seen in a certain light, in a very hateful and ugly light; sin viewed as egotistical, unenlightened, callous, self-complacent. Egotism, callousness, self-complacency—these are just the qualities which we must lay aside if we wish to come before the presence of God. We cannot even begin to lead a religious life unless we are striving to deny self, to love our brother, and to be humble-minded. More terrible, perhaps, than any other kind of vulgarity is the vulgarity of moral uncleanness. What more hopelessly vulgarizes a life than this? What more completely blinds it to the light of the Divine Presence? Only to the pure heart is vouchsafed the blessing of seeing God. Let us turn the searchlight of conscience upon our hearts, and ask ourselves whether we have that inner refinement of character and purity of soul which alone can enable us to live the life of the Spirit, or whether we are among the vulgar, the truly vulgar, who can in no wise enter into the heavenly city.

¶ The essence of all vulgarity lies in want of sensation. Simple and innocent vulgarity is merely an untrained and undeveloped bluntness of body and mind; but in true inbred vulgarity, there is a dreadful callousness, which in extremity becomes capable of every sort of bestial habit and crime, without fear, without pleasure, without horror, and without pity. It is in

the blunt hand and the dead heart, in the diseased habit, in the hardened conscience, that men become vulgar; they are for ever vulgar, precisely in proportion as they are incapable of sympathy —of quick understanding—of all that, in deep insistence on the common but most accurate term, may be called the "tact" or "touch-faculty" of body and soul: that tact which the Mimosa has in trees, which the pure woman has above all creatures— firmness and fullness of sensation, beyond reason;—the guide and sanctifier of reason itself. Reason can but determine what is true: it is the God-given passion of humanity which alone can recognise what God has made good. This is the chief vulgarity, that of character, the dull unconscious egotism; but there is also a vulgarity of intellect. There are minds which are so absorbed in personalities and trifles as never to rise to human interests in literature or politics, or the life of the home circle; and that without possessing the unlettered and often courteous dignity of the peasant. Ignorance is not vulgarity; the vulgarity lies in a prostitution of education to trivialities, or worse, which pastures on the criminal, or sporting, or society, or other gossip of the day. We feel the incompatibility of such a mind with all the higher life. This sort of vulgarity also excludes itself from the heavenly city. It is "whatsoever things are true . . . honourable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report"; it is these and thoughts of these that fit our minds for that city of the heavens. And the vulgarity of character and of intellect leads on by a dreadful law to the worst of all its manifestations, which is spoken of as uncleanness. The utter egotism, the want of respect and sympathy for others, the absorption in self-gratification, kept in check by no thought of what is pure and lovely and divine in others or ourselves, find here their crowning manifestation, and assuredly this blots out, like some dense fumes, the light of the presence of God, and debases the whole nature.

2. The next stage in the development of evil is that of moral offensiveness. Moral "uncleanness" rapidly becomes moral "abomination." In spite of the sinfulness of human nature, sin at a certain stage becomes offensive to the moral sense of the bulk of the people. There is an early point in the career of sin where the personal consciousness of moral obliquity far outweighs its moral offensiveness to others. The external relations of sin have not developed to the point of its becoming an abomination to men, though it is already an abomination to the all-holy God. But the road from "uncleanness" to "abomination" is an open way. The

sphere is one, and the path is continuous. The beginnings of moral evil must be cleansed, otherwise the godless man that has not yet forfeited the respect of society by offensiveness of life is destined, some day, to walk side by side with the miscreant, the savour of whose evil deeds reeks through the land.

¶ You will observe the seer is speaking not of persons, but of things. One might wonder at first sight why he does not from the outset use the masculine form. Why does he not say, "There shall in no wise enter into it any *man* that worketh abomination"? In the case of the second clause, the Revised Version has inserted the personal element, "*he* that worketh a lie." Yet I have no hesitation in saying that in so doing it has weakened, and not strengthened, the original sense. The writer is speaking primarily and mainly, not of actors, but of the influence of their acts. Indeed, it is a great blessing for the human race that it should be so. Personal salvation would be impossible except on the supposition that a man shall be enrolled in the membership of the Kingdom while yet he is in a state of uncleanness. This has always been regarded as the pith and marrow of the evangelical doctrine. It is as philosophical as it is orthodox, and it is as comforting as it is philosophical. The man who would enter the Kingdom of Christ must, according to St. Paul, enter by faith alone. He must not wait until he is pure. He must be content to come with the *intention* of purity, with the desire to be what he is not. He must be allowed to put his foot on the sacred threshold "just as he is, without one plea." He must be accepted for an aspiration. If he would have his name written in the book of life, it must be written there in *advance* of his life. He must be justified before he is sanctified—pronounced fit for the Kingdom in the light of days to come. The only hope for him is his permission to survive, his permission to enter within the gates of gold, while yet his own life has not transcended the brass.[1]

3. The final stage of evil is the complete perversion of the moral judgment as well as of the moral life—"maketh (or worketh) a lie." In the 22nd chapter we find the fuller phrase—"loveth, and maketh a lie." Sin, having grown into an abomination, acts upon the inner life of the sinner no less powerfully than it does on the moral sense of the beholders. Its external offensiveness goes hand in hand with internal destructiveness, until the life becomes perverted into fossilized evil and its every

[1] G. Matheson, *Sidelights from Patmos*, 327.

activity becomes a living lie. At last evil is loved as good, and good as evil. The true meaning of things becomes entirely distorted, and the soul lives and moves in an environment of absolute falsehood. Herein lies the consummation of the city of darkness, the barren and foul realm of untruth, which stands out in sharply defined contrast to the city that shines with the glory of God, with the blaze of the infinite Truth.

The words "to make (or do) a lie" are like our Lord's words, "He that doeth truth." To "make a lie" is to act contrary to the truth of man's being in his relation to God. Those who thus "make a lie" will always love darkness, and "hate the light" that shines from the City of God. But those who "do the truth" will love the light and come to the light which shines from her.

¶ Why does the seer of Patmos say "maketh a lie" and not "telleth a lie"? It is because he is not thinking of a *spoken* lie. He is thinking of what we call the principle of make-believe. He is contemplating the efforts of men to make the appearance pass for the reality, to give a gloss to circumstances, to cause things to seem what they are not, and not to seem what they are. And he declares that the result of these attempts is ever the same—evanescence. He maintains that nothing which is unreal can be permanent, that no sham can live, that everything false is, by its very nature, doomed to perish. And here again he has prophesied truly. Is there any sphere where the principle of Divine survival is so clearly manifest as in the region of illusions? Even the destruction of impurity is not so rapid. It is often left for a future generation to behold the dissolution of what was base and defiled. But every man, within his own lifetime, within a corner of his own lifetime, has been privileged to witness the death of make-believe. All this is no accident; it is a law, God's law, that law of Divine survival by which nothing lives on the stream of history which has won its pre-eminence by "making a lie."[1]

¶ In Plato's ideal state, while lying on part of the private citizens is condemned, it is allowed to magistrates. As Rendel Harris says,[2] it is a reserved art, practised by the guardians of the community upon the rank and file, presumably for their good. The rulers have reserved rights in untruthfulness. "The lying," he continues, "which Plato inculcated was not of the pitiful degraded kind which Liguori patronizes and which Cardinal New-

[1] G. Matheson, *Sidelights from Patmos*, 331.

[2] *Sidelights on New Testament Research*, 231.

man was so hard put to it to defend. But whatever was covered by the Platonic doctrine, the Christian Church generally repudiated it, and it is expressly repudiated in the Apocalyptic sketch of the New City."

II.

Those who may Enter.

"Only they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

1. *Their names are written in a book.*—To live in a book is one of the deepest desires of men. There are few who have not wished to have an influence on earth extending beyond the range of their earthly life. To have something that will survive us, something that will speak of us when we are gone, something that will make us a power in the world after we have passed away, is an ambition which, in some form or other, has been felt by all. Various have been the forms it has taken. Some have sought it by winning love, some by leaving a mass of money, some by rearing a monument of art, some by bequeathing the creations of music. But even those who would live by art, by sculpture, by music, expect to have their name preserved through the medium of a *book*. It is in no case by our own book that we mainly hope to live. Our ambition is to have our names written in some *other* book, to be quoted as an authority, to be referred to as an illustration. Even to write one's name in a visitors' book has a kind of symbolic pleasure; it suggests the transmission of fame. Even to appear in the fleeting columns of the newspaper gives a glow of satisfaction; it conveys the impression of publicity. But to have the name written in a real book, a living book, a book that will live, to appear in pages that are destined to last for centuries, to obtain honourable mention in a record that will endure as long as the language of your country—this is a goal of aspiration which any man might be proud to win.

¶ Our ambition is to get our names in a living book, a book that will live. But where is such a book to be found? How many books are there of living writers which one would venture to pronounce immortal? I have often asked myself, if all the authors of the present day were to stop writing from this moment, how many would be remembered, even by name, twenty-five years

after this. It would be invidious to say. Meantime, we cannot but observe that there is nothing in which the calculations of men have been so falsified as the fate of books. Works which were confidently promised an immortality by their contemporaries have, in a few years, been buried in oblivion; and works which, by their contemporaries, were unnoticed and unknown have filled the world with their fame. Sydney Dobell was pronounced a great dramatist; Alexander Smith was called one of the greatest of poets; yet Sydney Dobell is altogether, and Alexander Smith almost, forgotten. Thomas à Kempis issued his book in the darkness, and its coming woke no echoes in its time; but the world found it after many days, and posterity gave it a place next to the Bible. Every book that lasts through a series of centuries is in a sense a "Lamb's book." It has achieved success by sacrifice. It has postponed a temporal to an eternal interest. It has refused to follow the fashions of the hour. It has declined to purchase popularity by pandering to the spirit of a special age. It selects universal types of men, and is content to wait till that which is special has passed away. If Shakespeare had written for his age, he would have been famous in his age. But he preferred to disregard the accidents of humanity, to ignore that which was peculiar to the sixteenth century; and therefore he has found his atmosphere only in a later day.[1]

2. *It is the book of life.*—The book of life is that great volume in which the eternal and inexorable conditions of life are written. It is not, as some have supposed, an arbitrary catalogue of names, selected without a moral basis from the multitudes of men, to which eternal life is attached by an omnipotent *fiat.* Its fundamental character is not more elective than it is moral and spiritual. It is the awful and eternal focus of power out of which the currents of life perennially flow. It is the great God's charter of life based upon God's own nature, upon eternal truth and righteousness. The "book of life" is the record and forecast of victorious moral grandeur, of the vast achievement of God-given power in the hearts of men. It is the roll of heroes, the volume of the mighty, the record of the pure, the list of the strong sons of God.

¶ Those who returned from the Babylonian captivity were enrolled by families in a great book kept for that purpose. The names in this roll were supposed to constitute the new Israel;

[1] G. Matheson, *Sidelights from Patmos*, 321.

the nation which was henceforth a religious community—a church and a kingdom in one. To this nation was committed the task of rebuilding the sacred city of Jerusalem, and re-instituting the ancient worship of God on Mount Zion. But, when the exiles got home from Babylon, these people were disgusted by the paganism and poor moral quality of their kinsmen whom they found already there. This was the reason why they were so particular about the book of names. They refused to worship with or include in their fellowship those who had intermixed with foreign nations, and degraded the service of God by heathen rites. They therefore became very strict about the qualifications for citizenship in the new Jerusalem which they had now to build. Only those whose names were on the roll as being qualified by character, training, and descent for membership in the new kingdom were admitted to the altar, or allowed to dwell within the walls. But this ideal of a City of God and a Book of Life was never forgotten. Henceforth Babylon became a synonym for the Roman Empire, and the Book of Life a metaphor to signify those who were included in the Church of Jesus. . . . It is no longer the roll of those who came back from Babylon and were found worthy of citizenship in the reconstituted kingdom of Judah; it is the number of those who belong to Jesus in earth and heaven.[1]

3. *It is the Lamb's book of life.*—The phrase further teaches that the focus of life for fallen humanity is the Lamb. There is only one book of life for men, and that is the "Lamb's book." Men, having lost the central fount of power through the Fall, must rediscover it in the sacrificial Lamb of the cross. In the Lamb is now stored all God's power for the salvation of men. Strange that men are so slow to believe and accept this momentous truth. To-day, as in the days of His flesh, the Son of Man must often say, "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life."

¶ It is the Leper Asylum at Bankura—where the stage between the painful pilgrimage and the painless City is passed. . . . In the little church a pathetic sight is seen—squatting on the cool concrete floor, groups of men on one side, and women on the other side, are ranged. In front of the entrance the untainted children of the lepers from the Children's House are seated. The dread disease may at any time appear. . . . A hymn is given out. How they sang! A strange weird tune, sweet music to the

[1] R. J. Campbell, *Thursday Mornings at the City Temple*, 284.

angels bending down to hear the lepers' song of praise. Some lips were swollen and features disfigured. Others hid, under the one white garment, hands and feet from which fingers and toes were rapidly disappearing, or had already vanished. After the hymn every head was bent in prayer, an address was delivered, and then, after another hymn, came the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The missionary took the bread from one to another and slowly and with difficulty in many cases it was eaten, until he came to one bright-faced woman whose hands were mere shapeless pads; she tried to raise the bread but dropped it, and after a fruitless effort to recover it held out the end of her sari and lifted that to her lips. The cup was of course impossible. The minister with a spoon poured the wine into each upturned mouth; then all joined in repeating the beautiful words of the service.

"They which are written in the Lamb's book of life" enter in, leaving the uncleanness this side of that beautiful painless City.[1]

¶ An illustration may be given of the use which Stanley made of the opportunities of talking with working men, when showing them over Westminster Abbey. In 1882, at Bletchley Station, a gentleman travelling from Norwich to Liverpool entered a third-class smoking-compartment, which had as its other occupants two soldiers.

"We were," he said, "a very quiet party; one of the soldiers was reading a tract, the other was smoking. I was trying to decipher the title of the tract, or, if possible, to get into conversation with the reader of it, who sat opposite to me. At Rugby my opportunity came, when I proffered a light, at the same time asking what was the tract that seemed to interest them so much, for the second man was now reading it. I learnt that the tract was 'Wycliffe and the Bible.' They had each read it twice, and begged me to accept it, as it was 'so good everybody should read it.' 'Where is your home?' I asked. 'Chester, sir.' I said, 'I, too, am from a cathedral city—the city of Norwich.' 'Norwich!' both of them exclaimed, 'why, that's where Dean Stanley lived!' 'Yes,' I said, 'but what do you know about Dean Stanley?' I shall never forget the expression of the face turned towards me, as the speaker said, 'Me and my mate here have cause to bless the Lord that we ever saw good Dean Stanley, sir, I can tell you.' Then they recounted to me how some years before, when they had been at Shoeburyness for gunnery practice, they were released from duty a day earlier than they expected, and instead of starting for home they decided to spend the day in London. In carrying out this decision they found themselves at

[1] *The Foreign Field*, April 1908.

the Abbey just as the doors were locked, and they turned to retrace their steps with deep disappointment, which found expression. 'Our words and disappointed looks,' continued my friend, 'attracted the notice of a gentleman, who approached us and said, "You very much wish to see the inside of the Abbey, do you? Well, can't you come to-morrow?" "No, sir, we must be at Chester to-morrow, and if we don't see inside the Abbey to-day, it's not likely we ever shall." With this the gentleman invited us to go with him, and, taking the keys from the beadle, he entered with us into the Abbey, walking by our side, and pointing out to us the things most worth seeing. Presently he came to a marble monument erected to one of our soldiers, and, as we stood looking at it in admiration, the gentleman said, "You wear the uniform of Her Majesty, and I daresay would like to do some heroic deed worthy of a monument like this." We both said, yes, we should—when, laying his hand on each of us, he said: "My friends, you may both have a more enduring monument than this, for this will moulder into dust, and be forgotten; but you, if your names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, *you* will abide for ever." We neither of us understood what he meant—but we looked into his grave, earnest, loving face with queer feelings in our hearts, and moved on. Just as we were leaving the Abbey, our guide told us he was the Dean, and invited us to the Deanery to breakfast next morning. We did not forget to go, and after breakfast the Dean came to say good-bye. He gave us money enough to pay our fares to Chester, and once again, in earnest, loving tones, he told us to be sure and get our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and then, if we never met again on earth, we should meet in Heaven. And so we parted with the Dean; and as we travelled home we talked about our visit to the Abbey, and puzzled much as to the meaning of the Lamb's Book of Life.'"

It will be enough to say that those words proved the turning-point in the lives of those two men and their wives, and that as one of them said, "We trust that our names are written in the Book of Life, and that we may some day, in God's good time, meet Dean Stanley in heaven."[1]

[1] R. E. Prothero, *The Life and Correspondence of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley*, ii. 312.

The Perfect Life.

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The Perfect Life.

His servants shall do him service; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads.—Rev. xxii. 3, 4.

This promise or prophecy is the last and the best in the Bible. It seems purposely reserved to be the crowning point. For, to be with God, to be near God, to see God, to know God, to enjoy God, to be like God—these blessings are all subordinate to the blessing of *serving God.*

It is a promise not merely for a far-off heaven, but for a present practical earth. Ever since Jesus stood in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, the prosaic place of honest labour has become holy ground. Experience has taught us that there are certain fundamentals of character which cannot be learnt from pleasure or from pain, but only from work.

Often indeed it is as useful as it is delightful to look through such revelations upward; to use the Divine promise—not our mere aspirations, but the promise—as the means by which thought may reach toward the better world. Our vision will be but dim, at the clearest; but light from that pure eternity, even shed through clouds, can bring with it a strange reality of peace, and hope, and courage. So, when the two Pilgrims in the great Allegory looked from the Delectable Mountains through the perspective-glass of the Shepherds, "their hands indeed did shake, yet they thought they saw something like the gate, and also some of the glory of the place"; and they went forward singing on their way. But more often it is our duty and our safety not so much to gaze up into heaven as thoughtfully to remember that we "pass through nature to eternity." To us, we may be sure, if the path thitherward is not a reality, the brightness of the end is but a dream.

¶ Heavenly bliss is no arbitrary beginning of existence over again. It is the carrying out into endless issues of the process

which grace begins on this side the grave. It is a joyful harvest reaped in the sunlight of an eternal summer; but it is reaped off the very fields which were ploughed and sown beneath the clouds and showers of time.[1]

The text gives three elements of the perfected life—Service, Vision, Likeness.

I.

Service.

"His servants shall do him service."

To understand the precise force of this statement, one must observe that the two expressions for "servant" and "serve" are not related to one another in Greek as they are in English, but are two quite independent words, the former meaning literally "a slave," and the latter being exclusively confined in Scripture to one kind of service. It would never be employed for any service that a man did for a man; it is a religious word, and means only the service that men do for God, whether in specific acts of so-called worship or in the wider worship of daily life.

1. The highest life is a life of service. In heaven itself there is no emancipation from the bonds of God. The holy nations are eternally bound, in absolute obligation, to the will of God and of the Lamb. It is no part of the Creator's promise to raise or to educate the creature to independence, to self-dependence. That could not be, without a profound and fatal contradiction. The created soul cannot be the basis of its own being; how could it be the source of its own joy and power, or the law of its own eternity? We read what is but *likely* when we read that the nearer and the clearer is the sight of the Creator granted to the creature, the better the creature recognizes the blessedness of self-surrender; the nearer the approach, the more entire the service.

¶ I used as a child to pore over the Apocalypse, which I thought by far the most beautiful and absorbing of all the books of the Bible; it seemed full of rich and dim pictures, things which I could not interpret and did not wish to interpret, the

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *Christ is All*, 214.

shining of clear gem-like walls, lonely riders, amazing monsters, sealed books, all of which took perfectly definite shape in the childish imagination. The consequence is that I can no more criticize it than I could criticize old tapestries or pictures familiar from infancy. They are there, just so, and any difference of form is inconceivable. In one point, however, the strange visions have come to hold for me an increased grandeur; I used to think of much of it as a sort of dramatic performance, self-consciously enacted for the benefit of the spectator; but now I think of it as an awful and spontaneous energy of spiritual life going on, of which the prophet was enabled to catch a glimpse. Those "voices crying day and night," "the new song that was sung before the throne," the cry of "Come and see"—these were but part of a vast and urgent business, which the prophet was allowed to overhear. It is not a silent place, that highest heaven, of indolence and placid peace, but a scene of fierce activity and the clamour of mighty voices.[1]

2. The ideal life, though full of activity, knows the truest rest. There is a rest which is mere inaction—the quiet of the stone, the stillness of the grave, the exhaustion of a spent and feeble nature. But there is a nobler rest than this. There is rest in health; there is rest in the musical repose of exquisitely balanced powers; there is rest to the desiring faculties when they find the thing desired; there is rest in the rapture of congenial employment; rest in the flow of joyful strength; rest in the swift glide of the stream when it meets with no impediment. Such is the rest of the glorified—perfect beings in a perfect world, rejoicing in their native element, having no weakness within, and no resisting force without, to check the outflow and expression of their loving natures; their activity, therefore, being easy, natural, and necessary as light is to the sun, and fragrance to the flowers of spring—activity to them is rest.

Stagnation is as incompatible with the life that is lived in the heavenly city as it is with true life here. To represent heaven as a place of rest merely is to present it as a place where men would be less truly men than before. Peace and fellowship with God do not exclude activity; rather must they stimulate it.

> I count that heaven itself
> Is only work to surer issues.

[1] A. C. Benson, *Joyous Gard*, 119.

Heaven means the bringing to maturity and perfection of those powers and energies which are only partially developed here. "His servants shall do him service": in love without a grain of selfishness, in faith without a spasm of doubt, in knowledge without a shadow of uncertainty. All "those instincts immature," all "those purposes unsure," which we recognize in ourselves or have guessed in others, find their full development, their completion, when "that which is in part is done away."

> What here is faithfully begun
> Shall be completed, not undone.

The deepest rest and the highest activity coincide. They do so in God who "worketh hitherto" in undisturbed tranquillity; they may do so in us. The wheel that goes round in swiftest rotation seems to be standing still. Work at its intensest, if it is pleasurable work, and level with the capacity of the doer, is the truest form of rest. In vacuity there are stings and torment; it is only in joyous activity which is not pushed to the extent of strain and unwelcome effort that the true rest of man is to be found. And the two verses in the Book of Revelation about this matter, which look at first sight to be opposed to each other, are like the two sides of a sphere, which unite and make the perfect whole. "They rest from their labours." "They rest *not*, day nor night."

¶ Whatever may be the inability, in this present life, to mingle the full enjoyment of the Divine works with the full discharge of every practical duty, and confessedly in many cases this must be, let us not attribute the inconsistency to any indignity of the faculty of contemplation, but to the sin and the suffering of the fallen state, and the change of order from the keeping of the garden to the tilling of the ground. We cannot say how far it is right or agreeable with God's will, while men are perishing round about us; while grief and pain, and wrath, and impiety, and death, and all the powers of the air, are working wildly and evermore, and the cry of blood going up to heaven, that any of us should take hand from the plough; but this we know, that there will come a time when the service of God shall be the beholding of Him; and though, in these stormy seas where we are now driven up and down, His Spirit is dimly seen on the face of the waters, and we are left to cast anchors out of the stern, and wish for the

day, that day will come, when, with the evangelists on the crystal and stable sea, all the creatures of God shall be full of eyes within, and there shall be "no more curse, but His servants shall serve Him, and shall see His face." [1]

3. This life is distinguished by variety. The blessed God delights in variety. In all His works, along with perfect order, there is eternal change. There is no mountain exactly like another mountain; there are no two trees whose boughs bend into the same network of interlacing lines; no two leaves alike; no two clouds alike; no two waves alike; but the face of nature is infinitely diversified. So also is the Church. You see no two men with like endowments; no two spheres marked by exact similarity. Each one has his own peculiar gift for his own peculiar station; some have to serve their Lord with the power of the pen, others with the power of the tongue; some by their poverty, others by their wealth; and each one has a distinct individuality of power and place and opportunity. We see Aaron with his eloquence, and Moses with his stammering speech. There is a Jeremiah to give the prophecy, and a Baruch to read it; a Paul to plant, and an Apollos to water. One man is a "son of consolation," another a "son of thunder." One servant has five talents, another two, and another one. As the Church in heaven is but the consummation of the Church on earth, we may infer that the law of variety which shines in this earthly exhibition of Christianity, and which prevails all over this region of existence, sheds its fascinations over paradise.

The highest service that we can render is to reveal God. It is true that at the best we can only reveal certain aspects of God to another. One by his sterling integrity gives a glimpse of the Divine righteousness; another by his purity, a glimpse of the Divine holiness; a third by his sympathy, some reflection of the Divine compassion; a fourth by his tenderness, some idea of the Divine love. Only once has there been a man—the Divine Man—who could reflect every aspect of the Divine perfections; for He was the brightness of His Father's Glory, the express Image of His Person.

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, pt. iii. sec. i. ch. xv. § 12 (*Works*, iv. 217).

Here the whole Deity is seen,
Nor dares a creature guess,
Which of the glories brighter shone
The justice or the grace.

¶ "Because I live," saith our Lord, "ye shall live also," and *as living*, be partakers in that which belongs to Life: freedom, expansion, and variety. It has been often remarked that each one among the branches of our Lord's great family preserves some portion of His teaching more faithfully, reflects some aspect of His character more clearly, than is done by the rest, and passing from churches to individuals, we shall find that they who are in Christ will resemble *each other in so much* as they resemble Him; they will be like each other (as in earthly relationships) without being alike. Our natural characteristics are not obliterated; rather is the man renewed after Christ's likeness restored to *Himself*, that excellent thing for which God made him at the first, the type from which he had consciously fallen away.[1]

¶ Gladstone, Newman and Rainy—perhaps the three most remarkable men of their day of those who really applied their minds to the matters of Christian faith—were all in agreement not only as to personal experience of religion but also—if we except certain matters about the Church (and these are not in the Creed)—as to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. But the intellectual attitude of each of these minds to these doctrines was distinct. Gladstone's mind was essentially and constitutionally orthodox and he was never critical regarding ecclesiastical dogma. Newman's was essentially and constitutionally sceptical, and the Church's authoritative system was to him less the native home of his mind than its only refuge. Rainy's mind was well content to lodge in Catholic forms of doctrine, but he neither denied the element of imperfection and difficulty in such forms nor was disturbed by it, for this only made him more deeply feel "how great a thing it is to believe in God."[2]

II.

Vision.

"They shall see his face."

This is the highest station of honour in the service of God.

[1] Dora Greenwell, *The Patience of Hope* (ed. 1894), 139.

[2] P. Carnegie Simpson, *The Life of Principal Rainy*, i. 287.

To stand in the presence of the Great King, is the station of princes, the honour that belongs only to the royal family of heaven. In them the saying is fulfilled, "He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people." Theirs is the dignity of a life at court, the court of the "Ancient of Days."

1. The face is the index to the character and distinctive attributes of any being. In the poetry of the primitive ages, the "face" is another word for the character; and thoroughly to know it, and see into it, is thoroughly to know the real man. "The face of God," let it be reverentially spoken, is the character of God; to see it is to know what God is. The greatest revelation of the Father, according to St. Paul's teaching, was in "the face" of the Redeemer. St. John here tells us that this is the face which Christ's servants shall see by and by. But had not John seen this face already? Yes, in a sense. He had leaned upon the Master's bosom many a time, and looked up into that face, and if there was anything in Christ's human nature that expressed to John His Divine glory and tenderness beyond all other, it was that countenance. But John also saw only as much of that face as to awaken within him an intense yearning to see more. "We shall see him as he is," and "they shall see his face," are his fond refrains. He practically says, "It is true that for a brief time I saw His face, but there was so much of hiding in His incarnation, that I only saw dimly its deep meaning. By and by I shall see Him without any of the mist of His humanity that gathered round Him while on earth to lessen the brightness of His glory or the full beauty of His face."

¶ For anyone who knew the previous life of the author, the fitness of her roadmender to present herself and her ideals was obvious. "After all," he says for her in that opening chapter, "what do we ask of life, here or indeed hereafter, but leave to serve, to live, to commune with our fellow-men and with ourselves, and from the lap of earth to look up into the face of God?" That aspiration to service and communion had been in her no affair of mere aspiration: it had been a burning force, not a quietistic scheme. Yet always her heart and soul rested gladly in "the lap of earth"; and she turned her face towards the face of God as

she discerned that vision everywhere, in earth and earth's little ones, and in the face of man.[1]

¶ Day after day, O lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face? With folded hands, O lord of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face?

Under thy great sky in solitude and silence, with humble heart shall I stand before thee face to face?

In this laborious world of thine, tumultuous with toil and with struggle, among hurrying crowds shall I stand before thee face to face?

And when my work shall be done in this world, O King of kings, alone and speechless shall I stand before thee face to face?[2]

¶ "It comforts me much," said Whitefield in the last sermon he ever preached in London, "to think that, whenever God shall call for me, angels will carry me into the bosom of Abraham; but it comforts me more to think that, as soon as they lay hold of me, my first question to them will be, 'Where is my *Master*? Where is my *Jesus*?' And that, after all my tossings and tumblings here, I shall be brought to see His face at last."[3]

¶ Lord Houghton's notes of Carlyle's talk contain the following: "I would rather have one real glimpse of the young Jew face of Christ than see all the Raffælles in the world."[4]

> Men oft see God
> But never know 'tis He till He has passed.[5]

2. The full vision is possible only to the pure in heart. The pure in heart shall see God. In harmony with this, St. John, who wrote the words of the text, wrote also, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Having thus predicted the blissful consummation of a perfect vision of Christ, St. John proceeds to show how this hope to see Him, and to be like Him, produces in those who cherish it the necessary fitness for such a vision and attainment—"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Thus would be fulfilled in him the

[1] *Michael Fairless: Her Life and Writings*, 54.
[2] Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, 70.
[3] L. Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield*, ii. 562.
[4] *The Life, Letters and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes*, ii. 481.
[5] *Memoir and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*, ii. 60.

beatitude of the Saviour Himself, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

¶ Over the torno of the Convent of the Carmelites at Medina is Teresa's beautiful advice to her nuns—

"Let your desire be to see God, your fear that you may lose Him; your grief that you do not enjoy Him, your joy in all which may lift you to Him. Thus you shall live in great peace."[1]

¶ When St. Paul speaks of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, the context and its implied contrast show that he means the Face, and that his vision was a Face-to-face vision. And I think it was the vision of the Face that kept him so true to his message of the Cross. His question to the Galatians, Have not I seen Jesus Christ the Lord? means, *inter alia*, Have I not shut my eyes to all other seeing and turned away from all other vision? St. Paul's art was limited, he would paint figures; no, one figure; faces, no, one face. "That one face." "I love you," said General Gordon to a friend of mine (both are now on the other side), "because you paint faces"; "I love you, Paul," we may say, "because you paint one face, His. Even the Galatians would have given you their eyes for painting His. I would give you mine if I could see with yours."[2]

3. The vision becomes clearer through service. We learn to know our friend, not only by conversation and correspondence, but still more by work. It is when we receive a note from him, asking us to come up and help him in his day's duties, that we feel not only honoured by the request, but delighted with the prospect of getting that further insight into his character which a share in his work will certainly give. Perhaps the invitation is to be his secretary, and we shall then see how he bears himself in relation with others; or his messenger, when his mind will be laid open to us in the secrets he confides; or it may be he proposes to give us a piece of work to ourselves, and we shall have the happiness of discovering how it ought to be done. It is not otherwise with our Lord. His revelations are not reserved for those smaller and more definite acts of communion with Him which we call prayer. The larger parts of life are illuminated by His Presence. When we begin to realize that all our work is work for Him; that the work in the study, the office, and the shop may

[1] H. H. Colvill, *Saint Teresa of Spain*, 124.

[2] J. Rendel Harris, *The Sufferings and the Glory* (1914), 138.

be His as truly as the ministry in the Church or the mission room, then we shall learn to expect such visits of encouragement and guidance as some great employer of labour now and again pays to his workpeople.

¶ I find again and again illustrations of the saying, which I believe came from our Lord's own lips, though it is recorded in no gospel: "Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find Me; cleave the wood and there am I." The raising of the stone, the cleaving of the wood, are not works in themselves of an interesting or lofty character. They stand for the humble duties of life. Yet it is just then—when pursuing our daily tasks, which whether they be of head or of hand seem often so monotonous and so unprofitable—there at least as much as in our acts of private devotion, that I find from the experiences of Christian men and the witness of the Scriptures themselves that the Lord makes Himself known to us.[1]

¶ There is a beautiful legend which tells that one shepherd was kept at home watching a fevered guest the night the angels came to Bethlehem with the announcement of the birth of Jesus. The other shepherds saw the heavenly host, heard their song, and beheld the glory. Returning home, their hearts were wonderfully elated. But all the night Shemuel sat alone by the restless sufferer and waited. His fellow-shepherds pitied him because he had missed the vision and the glory which they had seen. But in his patient serving he had found blessing and reward of his own. He had missed, indeed, the splendour of that night in the fields, and in his serving he gave up his own life, for the fever-poison touched him and he died. But he had tasted the joy of sacrifice, and then his eyes saw a more wondrous glory when he entered the Divine presence.

Shemuel, by the fever-bed,
Touched by beckoning hands that led,
Died and saw the Uncreated;
All his fellows lived and waited.[2]

III.

Likeness.

"And his name shall be on their foreheads."

This means that *they shall wear the imprint of His perfections.* The name of a man is that by which he is identified and known;

[1] F. Ealand, *The Spirit of Life*, 63. [2] J. R. Miller, *Our New Edens*, 106.

and as God is identified and known by His perfections, His perfections are called His name. To have God's name is to bear a resemblance to Him—to have what we call His image and likeness. The face on which they gaze must transform, by the quickening power of its glories, each adoring spirit into its living likeness. If you turn away *from* the sun, your face will be in shadow, but if you turn *to* it, your face will shine, and the sun's name will be imprinted in letters of light upon your forehead; and so, by a glorious necessity, those who see God will shine with His reflected Name.

This is not some mystic mark that no one can understand; it is the beauty of holiness. When we study the Gospels and see Christ Himself, we learn what that name is which shines on the forehead of His friends. It is nothing mysterious or occult—it is patience, gentleness, thoughtfulness, humility, kindness, the spirit of forgiveness, meekness, peace, joy, goodness. People have no difficulty in discovering the marks of Jesus on those who wear them.

¶ The variety of nature is as useful as it is beautiful. What if faces had been like coins, and each one had to carry his name on his forehead to be known? His name on his forehead! There is an obscure way in which character imprints itself on the face. The very attempt to conceal writes—Hypocrite. In the future world this shall be complete, the soul and face keeping time like work and dial-plate,—infinite variety of character, perfect transparency in all.[1]

1. The name on the forehead is the sign of possession. Under the old dispensation a frontlet was worn upon the forehead as well as upon the left arm. The frontlet upon the left arm was tied on with a thong, which was wound around the arm until it reached the tip of the longest finger. This seemed to indicate that the power of service on the part of the individual was consecrated. The frontlet placed on the forehead between the eyes, on the contrary, was intended to express the fact that the whole intelligence of the man was consecrated to God. Thus St. John, having already referred to the service rendered, now speaks of the impress of Divine ownership which the noblest feature of man shall bear—"His name shall be on their foreheads." More than that, as the plate upon

[1] John Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 236.

Aaron's forehead had the words written on it "Holy is the Lord," so shall those who once were God's servants become His temple priests, and, seeing His face, shall also wear upon their foreheads the name of their God, and thus bear silent but eloquent and everlasting witness that they are His.

¶ Devout Hindoos always have marks on their foreheads, showing the particular god they worship. The trident indicates the worship of Vishnu; while ashes made from cow-dung are rubbed on their foreheads if Siva is their special deity. What impresses one so much is that they are not ashamed to own that they are followers of their gods, while *we* too often are ashamed to confess that we are followers of the true and living God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ.[1]

¶ J. M. Neale remarks that the Holy Name was set forth everywhere by the Saints of the Middle Ages; not merely in church art but in household and domestic furniture. "Go, for example," he says, "into many of the farms round here, and notice the fire-dogs that stand in the yawning chimney; how they are wrought at the sides into those most blessed of all letters, the IHC by which our dear Lord is set forth. Nothing so mean, that it was thought unworthy of this monogram; nothing so glorious, that it was considered unfit to have that excellent glory added thereto. Silver and gold and gems conspired together to mark out this Name on the paten, or the chalice, or the shrine; the manufacturer of Limoges worked it out in his enamel, the art of producing which we are only beginning to recover; in the monastery potteries they burnt it in on their tiles; in convents they embroidered it on chasuble and cope; in the glorious windows of churches the light came in, sanctified, as it were, and hallowed by the name of the true Light. I know all this very well. But I know also that the poor peasant was encouraged, with his clasp knife, to consecrate his house by carving the same name on the hutch of his door, or the barge-boards of his roof; the Name of Salvation could never be out of place among the dwellings of those who looked to be saved; the Name which to adore will be the work of eternity, could never be out of place for the meditation and the worship of earth."[2]

2. The name on the forehead means that the imprint of the Divine perfections will be open and visible. By the seal of the Spirit the servants of God even on earth bear this impression;

[1] H. S. Streatfeild, *Glimpses of Indian Life*, 4.

[2] J. T. Stoddart, *The New Testament in Life and Literature* (1914), 358.

and it is essential, in order to authenticate their claims. But, too frequently, the mark is scarcely seen; it is within their hearts, but it is not upon *their foreheads*, to be known and read of all men. Only He who knows the heart can trace it with absolute certainty. Infirmities disguise, or obscurities of station hide from view, the mystic name written on many a pillar of grace. It is like some dim inscription on a monument, mouldering into indistinctness, and veiled by trailing leaves, overlooked by the casual traveller, and deciphered only by the antiquary's eye.

¶ As fire is hidden in the unstruck stone, as the future flower is hidden in the present root, as the gem is hidden by the rough incrustation round it, the grace of God is frequently hidden by the weakness and waywardness of man. But there it will not be so. No one in that world will be satisfied with a secret and latent piety; not one will say, "I make no profession"; no deprecating voice will make the plea, "Lord, I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine!" To intimate that the name of Jehovah will be so conspicuously visible on all His servants that you must see it if you see them, it is said to flame upon their very foreheads.[1]

¶ The forehead is in itself an inscription; it is the mark of Man. For no other creature bears this smooth-domed architrave and *metopon* over the portal of its communication with the world. The birds, with their swiftness and airiness of motion, lack the forehead altogether; and the beasts, notwithstanding broad and heavy frontlets, designed, as it were, to push and thrust through the jungle or against the foe, have not the arched dome on which a name might be written. When there is the lofty dome of Shakespeare or of Sir Walter Scott, or "the bar of Michael Angelo," we estimate the genius which resides and works within by the stately span of the arched building. But even the humblest human brow is far removed from that of the noblest ape; on the ape's brow nothing can be written, but on the man's is at least written this: that he is a Man. It is this meaning and mark of the forehead which gives the imaginative glory to Milton's figure, when he says that the Star

> Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.[2]

3. The name is where others can see it, but where it is not

[1] C. Stanford, *Central Truths*, 231.

[2] R. F. Horton, *The Christian World*, March 24, 1910.

seen by the person himself. You cannot see your own forehead, and you are not aware of the nobleness or the brightness that others see there. This unconsciousness of the radiance on the face is part of the splendour; to be aware of it would be to dim the brightness. We know that when any one is conscious of the beauty or the refinement stamped on his face, a great part of the beauty or the refinement is gone. So self-consciousness mars spiritual loveliness. When a man knows that he is humble, he is no longer humble. The man who is truly poor in spirit is not himself aware of the shining of his life, the splendour of his deeds, the power of his words, or of his ministries. The best people are always the least conscious of their goodness and worth. Others see the shining, but they themselves do not.

¶ In meditation his face appeared to some a little severe; in relaxation none could be more gracious and genial. In his last years the light of heaven played about his features. This radiancy, which was but the symbol of the life within, was startling at times. On one occasion an Irish servant-girl opened the door for him at a house where he was calling, and on announcing him said that she had forgotten his name, but that he certainly had the face of an angel. This strange spiritual light was neither the silver shimmer of the hair nor the deep benignity of the far-shining pupil, nor the calm of the features. It seemed to be all these suffused with something else too subtle for description, something ethereal, rare, beatific.[1]

They do His will, they see His Face, their foreheads bear His name,
Who stand before the throne of God, and give the Lamb acclaim;
No curse can ever enter in, no night the glory dim,
Where shining souls, thus triple-crowned, eternal praises hymn.

Obedience such as theirs, O Lord, teach me even here below;
The vision of Thy blessed Face in bright effulgence show;
Thy name and image, clear and pure, grave deeper on my brow,
Till all shall see that I am Thine—my Lord and Master Thou!

[1] *A. J. Gordon: A Biography*, 186.

And thus shall curse, and night, and sin, like shadows flee
away
From out my life, and Light divine gleam through it every
day;
The Throne of God and of the Lamb fixed deep within shall
be,
Heaven's life and bliss already mine, and through eternity.[1]

[1] T. Crawford, *Horæ Serenæ*, 42.

The Alpha and the Omega.

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THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.—Rev. xxii. 13.

THERE is one feature of the Apocalypse of St. John which must strike every thoughtful student of that wonderful book. Through all the majestic sequence of the symbolic visions in which it shadows forth the struggles, the defeats, and the victories of the Church of God, it views everything from above. Commencing with the charge to the Apostle, imprisoned in the mines of Patmos, to write down the things which he sees and send them to the seven Churches of Asia, that outlook is maintained to the end. It is human life seen in the light of the exalted Christ. As the mighty pageant of judgment and conflict unfolds itself before the Seer's eye, he stands always above time and its changes; until at last the vision closes with the new heaven and the new earth, and the prayer, "Amen, come, Lord Jesus," passes into the familiar benediction of the saints.

The reason is plain. St. John has ever before his spirit the vision of the Eternal Christ. St. Mark's Gospel opens with the beginning of the earthly ministry. St. Matthew starts with the genealogy of Jesus, the Son of David, and the events which preceded His birth. St. Luke's Gospel of the Infancy commences earlier, yet even this sets out from the days of Herod the king. But St. John dips back into the eternity which was before the world was made, and there kneels in adoration before the Eternal Word, who in time became flesh and dwelt among men. His ear is full of the voices of the spiritual world which lies behind and above time and yet is immanent in it; and every voice that pierces the silence is eloquent of his Lord. To him was given an overwhelming sense of the eternal which transcends while it transforms the things which are nearest to us in the life of this present world. And so when the Apocalypse is finished and the pictured scroll of his vision is just about to be rolled up, as if to pledge once more and

finally the truth and reality of the revelation that has been made, the Voice which is the undertone of all things speaks the tremendous words, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Upon Him, the eternal Jesus, rests the solemn sanction of the message; here lies its awful claim to be heard; these are its credentials. It is the testimony of Jesus; it is the word of the Eternal Word.

I.

God's Alphabet.

1. An alphabet! What a strange world of possibilities lies hid in those few rudiments! There they lie before our eyes, twenty-six odd signs from A to Z; so unmeaning in themselves, so artificial, so queer. Could anything be less suggestive, less rational? Their very shapes have long ceased to be intelligible, except to those who grope about in a remote past and follow their lives back to old-world pictures of houses and camels and water and snakes, through which by a fanciful transition they have come to stand for sounds which have no relation whatever to those which the signs represented. Yet, although they lie there covered by one glance of the eye, they are the materials out of which whole worlds of experience and of literature can find their expression. Everything that has ever been said or thought or written by entire families or nations has found, in some combination of those quaint signs, its adequate realization. How incredible that those few artificial signs can adapt themselves to such infinite needs, the unnumbered shades of fleeting experience! And, again, the melodious refrains, the fine and rare evolutions of metre, the play and counter-play of inwoven rhymes, all the craft of a thousand poets spent on giving to the intricacies of feeling their perfect form and sound—all this has been wrung out of these twisted fragments. And this capacity is wholly unexhausted. Century after century will follow and still they will yield novel effects in prose and verse, and still there will be the endless delight of ever fresh combinations and complications to which the ear of man will delightedly respond, and in which the heart of man will discover itself anew.

2. As alpha is the first, so omega is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. Now the first and last letters of the alphabet may be used to represent in brief the sum and substance of any subject; just as we call the elements of any study its A B C, so that which is the all-pervading idea, the centre, the substance of any treatise would be its alpha and omega. When Christ declares Himself the Alpha and Omega, He declares Himself the sum and substance of expressed thought. Of whose thought is He the expression? Of whose language is He the theme? There can be but one answer. It is God's thought that He expresses, God's language of which He is the utterance. This truth, then, is proclaimed in the text—that Christ is the sum and substance of God's revealed thought.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men." What means this language but that the Son of God, who became flesh in Jesus Christ, is so emphatically the revelation of God's thought that He is called literally the Word of God, and that He has been so from the very beginning of all things? Christ is God's utterance; He is all of God's revealed thought; through Him the Father works; He created the world; He is the world's spiritual light.

(1) Christ is the sum and substance of the Bible itself, and so the practical truth, the substance of truth to be believed. The book is a mosaic, made by different artists under the unknown direction of a greater than they. It is God's word to man—manifold, complex, and prolonged; and yet when we receive it all, we discover that, of all this mass of revealed thought, Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the substance and the sum, the stone out of which each piece of the mosaic is taken, and the figure which all the pieces unite to portray. Looking back to the beginning we can see that though He was but seldom mentioned, He underlay all. In the earliest sacrifices, His sacrifice was implied. The ritual of the Tabernacle and the Temple anticipated His coming. All that God taught men of old time was part and parcel of Christ; so that, were it lost and He only retained, not one whit of God's thought would perish for mankind.

(2) Christ is the sum and substance of Bible doctrine as well

as of Bible history. Everything must be viewed in His light. Everything must be explained by its relation to Him. He is the text on which all else is the comment. He is the truth of which all else is the application. He is the centre from which all else radiates, and the foundation on which all else rests.

¶ In a certain canvas belonging to the modern French School, "The Repose in Egypt," by Oliver Merson, there is a piece of symbolism which fitly concludes the whole matter. Before our eyes stretches the limitless desert pervaded by mysterious half-lights; above it, the monstrous basaltic Figure that was quarried and sculptured in the depths of antiquity; then left there in the sand as a monument alike to the plastic powers and superstitions of primitive man. Its stony stare fills the desert with a sense of frustration and ancient death. Yet what is that lying muffled in a cloak not many yards away from the mammoth feet?—Joseph the carpenter perchance, who, flying southwards to escape the murderous frenzy of Herod, here rests awhile! But Mary and the Holy Child—where are they? Yonder—in the very lap of the Sphinx sleeps the Mother—in her arms the Babe, a radiant spot of light in the deepening dark. Such is the artist's dream, and now what is the interpretation thereof? Surely this—that in the heart of the great Enigma sleeps its Key! For, if that amorphous Form with the inscrutable stare be but the emblem of blind yet questioning humanity, propounding riddles while unable itself to solve them, it shelters One who, when grown to man's estate, was to break the silence, appeasing all yearnings, confirming all hesitancies, reshaping all faiths—One who, through paradox and parable, through doctrine, deed, and death, was to inscribe over all altars erected to the Unknown God those words of infinite rest—"Jesus hominum Salvator."[1]

II.

Christ's Eternity.

The text comprises Christ's declaration of Himself; He asserts His own eternity. He is the beginning of all things and the end of all things—an eternity of the past, an eternity of the future. His power for man resides in these, His two eternities, each of which, His life as Alpha and His life as Omega, has its peculiar benefits for us. Christ says, "I am Eternal." That must mean

[1] W. Aylmer-Stark, *Mens Jesu Christi*, 222.

not merely that He has existed and shall exist forever, but also that in the forever of the past and of the future He is eternally Christ, that the special nature in which He relates Himself to us as Saviour never had a beginning and shall never have an end.

Jesus sets Himself above all time-relations. His earthly life was but a brief one—not one half of the allotted space of man. He counted only thirty-three of our human years; and thirty of these were silent years. But somehow we feel as if our usual time-conditions did not fit in with His earthly life—as if some element of the eternal had dropped into the problem, giving to the figures wider spaces and larger meanings. He says to the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was, I am"—borrowing the language, and even the very name, of Jehovah. Again He says, as He dismisses His Apostles to their task, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," indicating that His "I am" is not as ours, shut in and narrowed by these brief moments, but spreading itself out to the farthest reaches of time, and over into the great eternities. So does Jesus set Himself above and outside our time-relations, and as He claims a conscious existence with the Father "before the world was"—that is, before our earth had begun its revolutions round the sun, and so before days and years had begun to be—Jesus sets Himself clear of all earthly years, back in the silent eternity.

¶ By this title God describeth His own being, and distinguisheth it from all other:—"I the Lord, the first, and the last; I am he" (Is. xli. 4). "I am he; I am the first, I also am the last" (xlviii. 12). "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (xliv. 6). But Christ is expressly called Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. This title is attributed unto Christ absolutely and universally, without any kind of restriction or limitation, without any assignation of any particular in respect of which He is the first or last; in the same latitude and eminence of expression, in which it is or can be attributed to the Supreme God. . . . Wherefore seeing Christ hath so immediately, and with so great solemnity and frequency, taken the same style upon Him, by which the Father did express His Godhead, it followeth that He hath declared Himself to be the Supreme, Almighty, and Eternal God. And being thus the Alpha and the first, He was before any time assignable, and consequently before He was conceived of the Virgin; and the being which then He had was the Divine essence, by

which He was truly and properly the Almighty and Eternal God.[1]

¶ A great variety of objects have been found with A and Ω inscribed upon them; it figures on tombstones, as well as on other monuments, on mosaics, frescoes, and bricks, also on vases, cups, lamps, and on rings; it appears also on coins, its earliest occurrence on these being of the time of Constans and Constantius, the sons of Constantine the Great. These all belong to different ages and different countries; in its earliest known form (Rome, A.D. 295) it appears as "ω et A," but this is exceptional, and is perhaps of Gnostic origin. The symbol in its usual form is found on objects belonging to the 3rd cent. in Rome and N. Africa; on objects belonging to the 4th cent. it has been found in Asia Minor, Sicily, Upper and Lower Italy, and Gaul; by the beginning of the Middle Ages it must have become known in most of the countries of Central Europe.[2]

i. Christ's Past Eternity.

1. Are we not in the habit of talking as if the redemption which called for an anointed Redeemer were a late thought in the universal history? Untold ages after the dateless time when God began to be, His almighty word was spoken, and a new world with a new race to live on it shaped itself out from the void. In that new world a new experiment of moral life brought a catastrophe unknown before, to meet whose terrible demands the great Creator came Himself and took the nature of this last creature living in His last creation. God was made man, and Christ the God-man was made manifest before the worlds. Here we make man a late thing in the history of the universe; and how is it possible, then, that Christ, who is God with the element of human sympathy, should be eternal? And just here comes in one of the key-passages of the Bible, which we are always far too apt to overlook. It is that verse in Genesis, "In the image of God created he man." God made man like Himself. Ages before the Incarnation made God so wonderfully in the image of man, the creation had made man in the image of God. Now, if we can comprehend that truth at all, it must be evident that before man was made the man-type existed in God. In some part of His

[1] J. Pearson, *An Exposition of the Creed.*

[2] W. O. E. Oesterley, in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, i. 1.

perfect nature there was the image of what the new creation was to be. Already, before man trod the Garden in the high glory of his new Godlikeness, the pattern of the thing he was to be existed in the nature of Him who was to make him. Before the clay was fashioned and the breath was given, this humanity existed in the Divinity; already there was a union of the Divine and the human; and thus already there was the eternal Christ.

¶ The coin of the realm is the creation of the sovereign; it proceeds from his authority and is called in by his authority, in token of which it bears his image and the inscription of his name. The soul of man is the spiritual creation of God, and, what is incomparably greater, the soul is created for union with God, of which she bears the sign in the image of God and in the inscription of His law, graved with light upon her spirit. The image and name of the sovereign are cast on perishable metal, but whilst the metal lasts it asserts his sovereign claim. The soul received from God bears His image and His law, the signet of His sovereign claim upon that soul. The coin of the sovereign bears his image on the surface; the image of God is in the inmost constitution of the soul, the soul herself is that image, and the light of God's law sealed therein is the direction of the soul to her Divine Original.[1]

2. Thus the Incarnation was God's commentary on that verse in Genesis, "In the image of God created he man." Yes, "from the beginning" there had been a second Person in the Trinity—a Christ, whose nature included the man-type. In due time this man-type was copied and incorporated in the special exhibition of a race. There it degenerated and went off into sin. And then the Christ, who had been what He was for ever, came and brought the pattern and set it down beside the degenerate copy, and wrought men's hearts to shame and penitence when they saw the everlasting type of what they had been meant to be, walking among the miserable shows of what they were.

¶ In Jesus Christ there is historically presented to us the actual realization of the Divine image in man. The resplendently glorious fact about Christ as man is that in Him we have the perfect realization of the moral image of the Father. Alone of all who have ever lived on earth, Jesus was absolutely and stainlessly holy. No flaw of imperfection marred His character; every

[1] Bishop Ullathorne, *The Endowments of Man*, 27.

moral and spiritual excellence existed in Him in the highest conceivable degree; His will was throughout in complete unison with the Father's. While of every other it has to be confessed that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts and desires, the thoughts and affections that issued from His heart were wholly pure. In His spirit shone the light of a perfect knowledge of the Father; His life was the model of perfect love, trust, obedience, submission to God's Fatherly will; the quality of everything He thought, said, and did, was what we call filial. He was the perfect realization of the spirit of sonship. In Him, therefore, as the central personage of history—the archetypal man, second Adam of the race, its new and saving head—there was given the perfect realization of the Divine image in human nature, and in that the revelation of the capability of humanity to bear that image.[1]

3. The highest importance of this truth of Christ's past eternity must always be for the great Christian doctrine of the Atonement, which tells us that when man fell from holiness to sin there appeared in the whole universe only one nature which had in itself a fitness to undertake the work of reconciliation and restoration. Only one nature stood forth saying, "Lo, I come!" Christ, the incarnate God, assumed the work and manifested the one necessary fitness in His union of the Divine and the human natures. Then comes the question, When did that fitness of the Christ begin? Was it a nature given Him when He was born of Mary? Was it a new assumption of an element of life which had before been wholly unfamiliar? If so, the Atonement becomes—what? A late expedient for patching up the breach in God's experiment; a special provision for an unforeseen catastrophe. The precious element of Christ's humanity becomes only the tardy and pitiful consequence of human sin. But take the deeper view. What if this fitness of nature were an everlasting thing in Christ, only coming to special utterance when He was born Jesus, the child of the Hebrew Virgin? What if He had borne for ever the human element in His Divinity, anointed Christ from all eternity? What if there had been for ever a Saviourhood in the Deity, an everlasting readiness which made it always certain that, if such a catastrophe as Eden ever came, such a remedy as Calvary must follow? Does not this deepen all our thoughts of our salvation?

[1] J. Orr, *God's Image in Man*, 271.

Does it not teach us what is meant by "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"?

¶ Jesus Christ died according to the appointment of His Father. They do fatally misconceive the whole evangelical system who represent the heart of the Father toward man as different from the heart of Christ. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son." It *pleased* the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell, and that that fulness should be opened up in His death. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. Christ is the Lamb which God Himself furnishes for sacrifice. The idea that God needed to be mollified or appeased by the sacrifice of His Son is a heathenish misconception. Whatever love dwelt in the heart of Christ was the love of the Father. Whatever fulness dwells in Him to forgive and to save is the fulness of the Father. He appeared to do the will of God when He came into the world to die.

Not only was He the Lamb appointed by God—He was also God Himself. He took upon Him our humanity, but He took it into union with His Divine nature. It was through His eternal Divine nature that He offered Himself to be a sacrifice to God, and because it was so the sacrifice was efficacious. He took human nature at His incarnation into eternal union with the Divine. The blood which He shed on the tree was the blood not merely of the Son of Mary, but of the Infinite Being thus united to a created form.

Much of the misconception which has attended the orthodox theory of the atonement has arisen from the fact that it has been unconsciously discussed on the Unitarian theory of the person of Christ. The transcendent mystery which we cannot remove lies in the fact that we have in the atonement the love of the Three-one God working for man; or, as it has been expressed, the self-reconciling of the Godhead with itself, or an action of the Godhead within, and at unity with itself for our salvation.[1]

ii. Christ's Future Eternity.

1. If the term "Alpha" asserts a past eternity for Christ, the other term "Omega" declares for Him an eternity in the future. There shall always be a Divine Human in the Godhead. This, too, is a truth which we are liable to forget. As we think that the marvellous nature of the Saviour began in the manger, so we sometimes feel as if its elements were sundered in the last agony

[1] W. R. Nicoll, *The Lamb of God*, 24.

of the cross. Practically a great many of us believe in a Trinity only for thirty-three years of history. Is not this the value of those passages in the New Testament which show us the ascended Saviour speaking or acting still in the same genuine humanity which He had worn on earth? While Stephen stood waiting for the crash of murderous stones, "he looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Saul, prostrate on the Damascus road, cried out to the rebuking voice, "Who art thou, Lord?" and the answer was, "I am Jesus." And as the last Revelation closes, the last voice that comes forth is the voice of Christ, still wearing His human name and lineage, "I Jesus have sent my angel. I am the root and offspring of David." What is all this for, but to assure us of the everlasting manhood in our Lord? The human hand still weighs; the human voice still speaks; the human heart still loves. He is not only Alpha, but also Omega. As all our hope shines from the truth that there ever has been, so it all centres in the truth that there for ever shall be, a Divine and human Christ.

¶ No part of the New Testament is so decided as the Epistle to the Hebrews in its presentation of our Lord's humanity. In this it is something like the Fourth Gospel, which opens with the statement that "In the beginning was the Word," and continues with the statement that "Jesus wept!" Think of the exquisite picture of the sympathizing High Priest, made like in all things to His brethren, tempted in all things like His brethren, not ashamed to call them brethren. Think of the language in which the suffering of Christ is described, the strong crying and tears, to which there is no parallel except in the Gospel of Luke (again one of the most human of books); or if it should be held to be an insertion in Luke (though I do not think this view will be held much longer), then make your parallel with the soul "sorrowful even unto death," without the vivid illustration from the suffering body. Indeed the whole of the passage about the offering of prayers to Him that was able to save His soul from death is so absolutely human that it even invites an apologetic treatment. Or take the passage in which the human evolution of Christ's character is described as a learning of obedience by the way of suffering, and you will see where the Arians, even if unbelieving, or only half-believing, could be reverent and almost devout.

But when we quote words like "learned obedience by the things which he suffered," we must not be satisfied that we have

got at the writer's whole meaning when we have pointed out the emphasis on our Lord's humanity; for this is the same writer who had just before been saying:

"Brightness of the Father's glory,"

which is not the description of you or me;

"Express image of his person,"

which is not my photograph or yours;

"Upholding all things by the word of his power,"

which is an Atlas task which our little arms have not even collectively undertaken;

"By himself making purgation of sins,"

which, to judge by the climax of the speech, is a more difficult task than the maintenance of the cosmic order, and therefore is not for you or me. Moreover, this is the very same writer who will presently be speaking of Jesus Christ under the strange and far from human terms of

"Yesterday, to-day and forever,"

which apply to no human creature and do not connote human nature.[1]

2. Because our life is in time and passes away, there is always a pathos about the end of anything which concerns us. An end will ever suggest a loss and a comparative failure, because it speaks of work done which must needs be seen to be lower than the highest. Apart from the faith which grasps the things eternal, the pathos becomes tragedy as each end points to the last end—death. Why do we shrink from the end of ourselves? Because, since, "man has forever," he can "look before and after," and he feels, inevitably, after the eternal. We shudder at our endings because of our capacity for immortality, and it is by the law of our own nature that we refuse to drop head foremost into the abyss of nothingness. That is one of many reasons why this message from Him who is both beginning and end comes to the human soul as a voice from heaven. It leads man to find his final rest in the bosom of the Eternal Christ.

[1] J. Rendel Harris, *The Sufferings and the Glory* (1914), 72.

¶ In his journal for 22nd December 1867—the year after his wife's tragically sudden death—Carlyle wrote:

"The last stage of life's journey is necessarily dark, sad, and carried on under steadily increasing difficulties. We are alone; all our loved ones and cheering fellow-pilgrims gone. Our strength is failing, wasting more and more; day is sinking on us; night coming, not metaphorically only. The road, to our growing weakness, dimness, injurability of every kind, becomes more and more obstructed, intricate, difficult to feet and eyes; a road among brakes and brambles, swamps and stumbling places; no welcome *shine* of a *human* cottage with its hospitable candle now alight for us in these waste solitudes. Our eyes, if we have any light, rest only on the eternal stars. Thus we stagger on, impediments increasing, force diminishing, till at length there is equality between the terms, and we do all infallibly ARRIVE. So it has been from the beginning; so it will be to the end—forever a mystery and miracle before which human intellect falls *dumb*. Do we reach those *stars* then? Do we sink in those swamps amid the dance of dying dreams? Is the threshold we step over but the *brink* in that instance, and our *home* thenceforth an infinite Inane? God, our Eternal Maker, alone knows, and it shall be as He wills, not as we would. His mercy be upon us! What a natural human aspiration!"[1]

Earth breaks up, time drops away,
In flows heaven, with its new day
Of endless life, when He who trod,
Very man and very God,
This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
Dying the death whose signs remain
Up yonder on the accursèd tree—
Shall come again, no more to be
Of captivity the thrall,
But the one God, all in all,
King of kings, and Lord of lords,
As His servant John received the words,
"I died, and live for evermore."

III.

Man's Alphabet.

1. There is nothing we can think of in God that we do not possess in Jesus. We say to Him, as the psalmist said to

[1] J. A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle, 1834–1881*, ii. 361.

Jehovah, "Thou art my Lord, I have no good beyond thee." We look at Jesus in all His relations with men, and supremely when He hangs on the cross, and we are compelled to confess, "Behold our God!" That is what we mean by the word "God." In Jesus dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. What more can there be?

Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in Thee I find.

In the unveiling of the character, the purpose, the heart, the will of Him whom we adore as God over all, Jesus is our Alpha and our Omega.

¶ All the great controversies which have raged round the Person of Jesus Christ have not been able to obscure His message or diminish His power over the hearts of men. He speaks to-day, as He spoke long ages ago, through the voice of a living religious experience. As men look, not back to Him as they are often urged to do, but up to Him, they find the beginning of a new life and the inspiration to a nobler service. The memory of His words and the example of His deeds remain an undying source of inspiration. But the true servant of Christ finds more in Him than this, precious and effective though it is. His living presence with the soul of man has become in the case of multitudes an experience which cannot be gainsaid. In the eyes of the Apostles Jesus claimed to fulfil the functions of the Old Testament Messiah, to judge the world, to forgive sins, and to be the Lord of life and death. These are the prerogatives of God Himself, and yet the modern Christian sees no incongruity in granting the claim. That the claim should be contested is natural enough, and the appeal in proof of it is still, as it was in the early days, to the experience of those who have known Christ for themselves, and to the effect which He has produced in and through them. . . . In a sense which is true of no other personality in history, Jesus Christ still lives and still speaks to the hearts of men. The truth of His message each man may test for himself, not by the process of historical inquiry and criticism alone, but by those deeper and more subtle processes, obedience and faith. There is a charm about His demeanour and a simplicity about His words that will always appeal to the student. But to know Him in all His power and beauty it is necessary to become not merely a student, but a disciple. To the inner Sanctuary of His presence there is only one password—My Lord and my God.[1]

[1] W. B. Selbie, *Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, 167.

2. We have no hesitation in going to Jesus for the final solution of any problem which may arise in connexion with man's relations to the Unseen, or with his most practical relations with his fellows. We do not think of Jesus as tentative and temporary, as affording us the best guidance up to date, but ultimately to be surpassed or superseded. We take the most complicated questions of our age—race problems, industrial perplexities, political questions, social questions—we take them all to Jesus, certain that His spirit, if seriously and conscientiously applied to them, will infallibly lead to an ultimate solution. We do not expect to find our questions answered in so many words in the teaching of Jesus. But the principle, the controlling spirit, has been given in Him, and we are confident that the spirit of Jesus is adequate to guide us to such a solution that, if we obey, we shall find the Kingdom of God coming, and at length see His will done in earth, as it is in heaven.

¶ Mr. Higginson reports an interesting conversation between Emerson and Whittier. The former had remarked that the world had not yet seen the highest development of manhood.

"Does thee think so?" said Whittier. "I suppose thee would admit that Jesus Christ is the highest development our world has seen?"

"Yes, yes, but not the highest it will see."

"Does thee think the world has yet reached the ideals the Christ has set for mankind?"

"No, no, I think not"

"Then is it not the part of wisdom to be content with what has been given us, till we have lived up to that ideal? And when we need something higher, Infinite Wisdom will supply our needs."[1]

> Yea thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning
> He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed:
> Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
> Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.[2]

3. But Jesus is not only the unveiling of the ideal for ourselves and for all men; He is also the inspiration to achieve it. It is because we have discovered in Him the mightiest force of which we are aware, a force whose potencies we never seem to

[1] H. S. Coffin, *University Sermons*, 43.
[2] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul.*

exhaust, that we are driven to confess that He is the Alpha and the Omega. Were Jesus any less to us than final He could not enlist all our loyalty and command our entire consecration. He draws from us all the reverence, all the confidence, all the adoration, all the self-dedication of which we are capable.

A soul enters on the higher life, passes by the doorway of conversion from disobedience to obedience. When does that soul find Christ? Is it after it has passed, by some power of its own, over the threshold, that there, on the inside, it finds the Lord waiting to be its leader? Oh no! it looks back and cannot tell the moment when it was not led by Him. It came, but He called. It answered, but first He spoke. Yes, we begin, but Christ always began before us. He is the Alpha of our religious life, antedating every act of man's obedience by the eternal promptings of His spirit and the eternal freeness of His grace. And then He is its Omega too. We may go far in the eternal developments of holiness, but we can never outgo Him. He will be present at the end of every period of everlasting progress, to round and close it for us and to introduce us to a new one as He introduced us to the first, for He is exhaustless.

¶ The fault of our religion is that we do not know enough of Christ. May God grant that, if we have at all learned how He begins the Christian life in man, we may go on learning new lessons of His wondrous power every day, till some day, in the perfect world, we learn the perfect lesson of how He can glorify a poor, weak, human creature with Himself, and, gathering all its culture into Him, take our souls for His and be our Omega, our End as He has been our Beginning, the last complete fulfilment of the last prayer that we shall ever pray, when prayer ceases because need has ceased forever![1]

¶ The mystic union between Christ and His Church unfolded by St. Paul was the inspiration of Lord Radstock's life. St. Paul saw the Church of his vision "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," while the individual "believer" was declared to be "complete" in Christ. In that completeness Christ "has perfected for ever them that are sanctified," although such "completeness" is not apparent in our present imperfect and temporary condition, our want of experience causing limitations in the apprehension of these divine truths.[2]

[1] Phillips Brooks, *The Mystery of Iniquity*, 326.
[2] Mrs. E. Trotter, *Lord Radstock* (1894), 86.

¶ No imitation of Christ can be according to the Gospel if it is anything else than an aspect of the life of faith. The task of the disciple is not in the narrower sense to copy Jesus, but to receive His spirit, understand His mind, and let Him be formed within. Disciples are to preach, through a life of love, Christ's life; and through faith He begets in His followers a likeness to Himself, so that in a relative and mediate sense, disciples are fitted to be examples founded on the Spirit of Jesus. Christ cannot be followed by *imitating* Him in externals. Christian ethics presuppose the Christian Gospel—obedience follows from knowing Christ as our life and our hope, and the faultless fulfilment of daily vocation is founded on an inner principle of faith and love, not on that of external copying Him, who is the contemporary of all the ages, and is exhausted by none. Scripture exhorts men to exclusive loyalty toward the Master, to a possession of the mind of Christ, to a change by beholding Him, to strenuousness in following Him, to a putting on of Christ or the new man, to following in His steps, as well as to the retention of hope. But all these rest on inward faith and love as their root, arise from a heart touched by Christ's Holy Spirit, and from the spiritual insight and purity of moral perception thereby created.[1]

[1] D. Butler, *Thomas à Kempis*, 57.

The Privileges of the Blessed.

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The Privileges of the Blessed.

Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.—Rev. xxii. 14.

The first Beatitude that Jesus Christ spoke from the mountain was, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." The last Beatitude that He speaks from heaven is, "Blessed are they that wash their robes." And the act commended in the last is but the outcome of the spirit extolled in the first. For they who are poor in spirit know themselves to be sinful men; and they who know themselves to be sinful men will cleanse their robes in the blood of Jesus Christ.

¶ I always regard this as a test text. I should like to ask every Sunday-school teacher, every district visitor, every worker in an inquiry room, to take it, just as it stands, and expound it. And if he stumbles over it, or muddles it, I should like to send him back for a while to a form in God's school, there to learn Christ from Christ Himself, before he ventures to teach others. I said "learn Christ"; not theologies, not systems of doctrine, but Christ. Christ is here in every word, Christ Jesus, God's Anointed Saviour of poor sinners; "all and in all" to souls. If a man cannot preach Christ from this passage, He does not know the Gospel so as to be a fit teacher either of babes, or of strong men. It is not a difficult passage, if a man has first the root of the matter in him, and then has sat, as a little child, at the feet of the Holy Ghost to be taught, as He alone can teach, God's beautiful equipoise of truth.[1]

The text tells us (1) who are the Blessed of the last Beatitude, and (2) what are their Privileges. The Blessed are "they that do his commandments," or, as in the Revised Version, according to another reading, "they that wash their robes." Their privileges are right of access to the Tree of Life and entrance through the gates into the City.

[1] A. C. Price, *Fifty Sermons*, ii. 105.

I.

The Blessed.

We are face to face at once with a difficulty of reading. The A.V. had "Blessed are they that do his commandments," following one reading; the R.V. "Blessed are they that wash their robes," following another. The difference, which seems so great in English, is due to the exchange of only a few letters in Greek. But the change from the Authorized Version to the Revised is generally hailed by expositors as a relief. "Blessed are they that do his commandments," says Maclaren, carries us back to the old law, and has no more hopeful a sound in it than the thunders of Sinai. If it were, indeed, among Christ's last words to us, it would be a most sad instance of His "building again the things he had destroyed." It is relegating us to the dreary old round of trying to earn heaven by doing good deeds; and I might almost say it is "making the cross of Christ of none effect." The fact that that corrupt reading came so soon into the Church and has held its ground so long, is to me a very singular proof of the difficulty which men have always had in keeping themselves up to the level of the grand central gospel-truth: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."

Dean Vaughan speaks even more strongly against the reading. If this is the saying of Christ, he says, we must bow to it. If it pleased Him to leave as His last word to the Churches the condemning sentence, it is not for us to remonstrate or to rebel. If it was the will of Christ to replace His Church, by the very latest of His revelations, on a footing of meritorious obedience, it must be so, and, though with downcast looks and tottering steps, we must set ourselves to follow. Yet we cannot check the rising thought, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel."

But is there this difference between the readings? There is, and more than this difference, if they who "do his commandments" have not yet "washed their robes"; or if, to put it from the other side, the washing of the robes were not one of the commandments that had to be done, and indeed the sum and sub-

stance of them. It is quite true that our right of access to the Tree of Life is not of works, but of grace; yet when we have been saved by grace we proceed to keep the commandments of God. This is the evidence of our salvation, and the enjoyment of it. "If a man love me, he will keep my words"—that is doing His commandments—"and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John xiv. 23)—that is enjoying access to the Tree of Life.

¶ Swete has some difficulty in deciding between the readings. If the Greek letters were changed in the course of transcription, he thinks it slightly more probable that "wash their robes" arose out of "do his commandments," than that the reverse occurred. But the evidence of the documents is in favour of "wash their robes"; and in the Johannine Writings the phrase is "*keep* his commandments," "do" occurring only once, in 1 John v. 2. On the whole, then, he thinks, "wash their robes" may with some confidence be preferred.

1. I need not remind you, I suppose, says Maclaren, how continually this symbol of the robe is used in Scripture as an expression for moral character. This Book of the Apocalypse is saturated through and through with Jewish implications and allusions, and there can be no doubt whatever that in this metaphor of the cleansing of the robes there is an allusion to that vision which the Apocalyptic seer of the Old Covenant, the prophet Zechariah, had when he saw the high priest standing before the altar clad in foul raiment, and the word came forth, "Take away the filthy garments from him." Nor need I do more than remind you how the same metaphor is often on the lips of our Lord Himself, notably in the story of the man who had not on the wedding garment, and in the touching and beautiful incident in the parable of the Prodigal Son, where the exuberance of the father's love bids them cast the best robe round the rags and the leanness of his long-lost boy. Nor need I remind you how St. Paul catches up the metaphor, and is continually referring to an investing and a divesting—the putting on and the putting off of the new and the old man. In this same Book of the Apocalypse, we see, gleaming all through it, the white robes of the purified soul: "They shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy." "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number,"

who had "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

¶ All three made their way to the beautiful valley of Ivirna, where the lands of the chief Manaune were situated. The welkin rang with merry shouts of *Kua tau mai Rori*! ("Rori is found!"). The news spread all over the island the same day, so that crowds came to see this poor fellow. And a miserable skeleton he was, his skin almost black through continual exposure. A feast was made for him by the people of Ivirna, but he scarcely tasted the unaccustomed food. He was then led in procession round the island by his protector and others; the crowning point was for him to bathe in Rongo's Sacred Fountain, in token of his being cleansed from a state of bondage and fear, and being allowed to participate freely in all the good things of the dominant tribe.[1]

¶ White was widely considered among the ancient nations as the colour of innocence and purity. On this account it was appropriate for those who were engaged in the worship of the gods, for purity was prescribed as a condition of engaging in Divine service, though usually the purity was understood in a merely ceremonial sense. All Roman citizens wore the pure white toga on holidays and at religious ceremonies, whether or not they wore it on ordinary days; in fact, the great majority of them did not ordinarily wear that heavy and cumbrous garment, and hence the city on festivals and holidays is called "candida urbs," the city in white. Especially on the day of a Triumph white was the universal colour—though the soldiers, of course, wore not the toga, the garb of peace, but their full-dress military attire with all their decorations—and there can hardly be any doubt that the idea of walking in a Triumph similar to that celebrated by a victorious Roman general is present in the mind of the writer of the Apocalypse when he uses the words, "they shall walk with me in white." A dirty and dark-coloured toga, on the other hand, was the appropriate dress of sorrow and of guilt. Hence it was worn by mourners and by persons accused of crimes.[2]

2. The foul robes can be cleansed. The text does not state the method. That has already been declared. "They washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (vii. 14). In his Epistle, St. John has the same paradox: "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). St. John saw the paradox, and he saw that the paradox helped to illustrate

[1] W. W. Gill, *From Darkness to Light in Polynesia*, 234.

[2] W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, 386.

the great truth which he was trying to proclaim, that the red blood whitened the black robe, and that in its full tide there was a limpid river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the cross of Christ.

¶ In one of the letters written by Dr. Dale during the first year of his ministry at Carr's Lane, he says: "If all the truths which have been realized and made precious eras of our religious progress, all the facts which at different times have assumed to our spiritual consciousness the hardness and grimness of a rock, all the wisdom which has come from the lips of others, or has been painfully learnt from doubt and difficulty and sin and folly, could be kept visibly and consciously before the mind, how different our life would be. Why, even that blessed text, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin,' which sometimes comes down on the heart like a whole heaven of peace and joy and glory, will at other times be as meaningless as the darkest sayings of the prophets, or as powerless as the vainest utterances of human folly. And then just as one is bemoaning its darkness, it will suddenly blaze out in astonishing brightness, and almost startle the heart by its revelations of safety and strength."[1]

3. But it is not a past washing only that is spoken of here. It is also a daily washing of the robes of the redeemed even now. It is not, "Blessed are they that have washed." The Greek is the perpetual present—"Blessed are they that keep washing." Having once washed the whole body in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, they have need constantly to wash the feet, soiled afterwards, and again and again, by contact with the dust and the miry clay of this world. "Blessed are they that evermore wash their robes," by an ever-repeated application of the "blood of sprinkling" alike to the accusing conscience and to the sin-stained life.

It is a most dangerous thing to fall into the habit of letting any committed sin pass *sub silentio* (as it were) between man and his soul. Scripture indeed counsels no morbid self-scrutiny. Harm may be done by it. A man may walk timidly and slavishly before God by reason of it. We are not taught that many express words, or perhaps any express words, need pass about particular wrong thoughts, acts, or words, in direct converse on the subject between God and the soul. But if so, it must be because the intercourse is so thorough that it need not be microscopic. The

[1] A. W. W. Dale, *The Life of R. W. Dale of Birmingham*, 79.

man does not wash each separate spot and stain, because he washes the whole robe, and them with it. One way or another, the tablets of memory and the tablets of conscience and the tablets of life must be sponged clean every evening—and in only one way, by what Scripture calls "the blood of the Lamb"—that is, the atonement made once for all for all sin, applied in earnest faith to the individual man's heart and soul in the sight of God.

¶ I have been told, says the Rev. D. M. Henry of Whithorn, Wigtownshire, that in this district in days gone by, those who were communicants of the Church might be known by the "washings" on the ropes in their greens, or, if they had no greens, on the dykes and hedges near their houses on the week before the communion Sabbath. And on one communion Sabbath morning, as I had occasion to go over the dewy fields very early, I met a working man near a rock in the middle of a field well away from the town, to whom I said, when I came up to him, "Dear me, James, you are early about." To which he replied, "Ay, I always come out at sunrise on the communion Sunday to prepare"; and then something told me quite plainly that he had been at prayer at the rock-side before I had appeared.

4. The washing of their robes is done by the blessed themselves. "Blessed are they that wash their robes." On the one hand is all the fulness of cleansing; on the other is the heap of dirty rags that will not be cleansed by our sitting there and looking at them. The two must be brought into contact. How? By the magic band that unites strength and weakness, purity and foulness, the Saviour and the penitent; the magic band of simple affiance, and trust, and submission to the cleansing power of His death and of His life.

¶ A long list of uncouth, monosyllabic names at the end of Dr. Gordon's church directory attests the patient interest which the Clarendon Street Church has taken in the Chinese of the city. A school was organized many years ago for these strangers. Its proportions grew rapidly. More than one hundred laundrymen from all parts of Boston and from adjacent towns meet each Sabbath. . . . That conversion is much the same experience among all peoples can be clearly seen from the following:—

Chin Tong came into the mission school a raw, uncouth, unresponsive Chinaman. Unlike most of his fellows, he was in his person very unclean and unsavory. The teacher to whom he was

assigned worked with him month after month without making upon him the least apparent impression. One Sunday the text, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," was marked in his New Testament and assigned for the next lesson. When he turned up the following Sabbath the verse was almost obliterated from the page by the incessant movement of his finger back and forth over the lines. One word alone puzzled him, the word "cleanse." However, this was easily explained to one whose daily work was over tubs and ironing-boards. During the next week a young man called twice at the teacher's home, but would not leave his name. When the hour for the Chinese school came round again, the teacher took her seat in the accustomed place. Presently a man in Occidental dress entered and sat down beside her. It was Chin Tong, but so changed as not to be recognizable. His cue was off, his hair shingled, his long finger-nails pared, his face clean as a new coin, his clothes new and well cared for. The text had done its work. "Jesus Christ make me clean inside and outside," he explained. Heart, mind, and person had been transformed.[1]

II.

Their Privileges.

Their privileges are two: Right to come to the Tree of Life and Entrance into the City. Now the Tree of Life is in the midst of the Paradise of God, and the Paradise is in the centre of the City of God. So we come first through the gates into the City.

i. Entrance into the City.

The city is the society of the redeemed. In relation to Christ it is spoken of as a bride. In relation to the followers of Christ themselves as a city, the city in which they dwell together. In the old world the whole power and splendour of great kingdoms was gathered in their capitals, Babylon and Nineveh in the past, Rome in the present. To St. John the forces of evil were all concentrated in that city on the Seven Hills. To him the antagonistic forces which were the hope of the world were all concentrated in the real ideal city which he expected to come down from heaven—the New Jerusalem.

[1] *A. J. Gordon: A Biography*, 341.

What are the characteristics of this city of God into which the blessed of the last Beatitude enter?

1. *It is a city of social activities.*—Genesis began with a garden; man's sin sent him out of the garden. God out of evil evolves good, and for the lost garden comes the better thing, the found city. "Then comes the statelier Eden back to man." For surely it is better that men should live in the activities of the city than in the sweetness and indolence of the garden; and manifold and miserable as are the sins and the sorrows of great cities, the opprobria of our modern so-called civilization, yet still the aggregation of great masses of men for worthy objects generates a form of character, and sets loose energies and activities, which no other kind of life could have produced.

¶ Why do our citizens appear to care less for London than their citizens care for Florence, or Venice, or Rome, or Pisa? Is it because we are interested mainly in a few famous thoroughfares and buildings and have never yet begotten a civic patriotism enlightened and powerful enough to care for the back streets and obscure houses? Are we satisfied if our millionaires are richly housed in Park Lane, that their destitute neighbours should be rack-rented for the use of a cellar in St. Pancras or Soho? It is the old story. We perish for lack of vision. The cure is to breed citizens who shall be penetrated with the civic ideal. No man with the New Testament in his hand can complain of lack of guidance in the matter of citizenship. Here is Paul, the hero of the Apostolic age, boasting his *local patriotism* to the city of Tarsus, proud of its commercial and educational traditions; glorying, secondly, in his *imperial citizenship*, and looking beyond the narrow boundaries of Tarsus to the frontiers of the Roman Empire to whose civilization and citizenship he was free-born; and, finally, claiming the supreme privilege of his *citizenship to the Kingdom of God*, his membership of a society that acknowledges no limitations of race, or tongue, or land, but exists to create a universal brotherhood on the basis of a universal righteousness. There are still thousands of excellent Christians who admire and extol Paul's devotion to the Kingdom of God, who have no use for his local patriotism or his imperial citizenship. Yet the lesser flags do not challenge the supremacy of the august Standard that is the symbol of Christ's universal rule.[1]

¶ In a speech he delivered at the opening of the Manchester

[1] C. Silvester Horne, *Pulpit, Platform and Parliament*, 182.

Art Treasures Exhibition in 1878, the Bishop said: "I have no wish, like Mr. Ruskin, to retire into the solitude of a Westmoreland valley. I like to hear the thud of the steam-hammer and the whistle of the locomotive. I like to live in the midst of men and women who are dependent on their industry for their daily bread. Where I find content and good relations subsisting between men, that is my bit of blue sky, of which I want to see more and more."[1]

2. *It is a city of reunion.*—Scripture leads us to associate the reunion of dead and living with a world from which all idolatry and all selfishness will have been for ever cast out by the unveiled presence of that one Person whom to know is life, whom to serve is glory. St. Paul used to speak of meeting there his own converts, Asiatic and European, and seemed to say that it would scarcely be heaven to him if they shared it not with him. "He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us—*with you.*" "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" So large was his conception of the amplitude of the glory, and of its characteristic features of human sympathy as well as of Divine communion.

¶ Surely there, amidst the solemn troops and sweet societies, the long-loved, long-lost, will be found again. I cannot believe that, like the Virgin and Joseph, we shall have to go wandering up and down the streets of Jerusalem when we get there, looking for our dear ones. "Wist ye not that I should be in the Father's house?" We shall know where to find them.

> We shall clasp them again,
> And with God be the rest.[2]

3. *It is a city of abiding.*—The city is the emblem of security and of permanence. No more shall life be as a desert march, with changes which only bring sorrow, and yet a dreary monotony amidst them all. We shall dwell amidst abiding realities, ourselves fixed in unchanging, but ever growing, completeness and peace. The tents shall be done with; we shall inhabit the solid mansions of the city which hath foundations, and shall wonderingly exclaim, as our unaccustomed eyes gaze on their inde-

[1] T. Hughes, *James Fraser, Second Bishop of Manchester*, 242.
[2] A. Maclaren, *A Year's Ministry*, i. 52.

structible strength, "What manner of stones, and what buildings are here!"—and not one stone of these shall ever be thrown down.

¶ The third essential development of Marius' thought is that of the City of God, which for him assumes the shape of a perfected and purified Rome, the concrete embodiment of the ideals of life and character. This is indeed the inevitable sequel of any such spiritual developments as the fear of enemies and the sense of an unseen companion. Man moves inevitably to the city, and all his ideals demand an embodiment in social form before they reach their full power and truth. In that house of life which he calls society, he longs to see his noblest dreams find a local habitation and a name. This is the grand ideal passed from hand to hand by the greatest and most outstanding of the world's seers—from Plato to Augustine, from Augustine to Dante—the ideal of the City of God. It is but little developed in Pater's "Marius the Epicurean," for that would be beside the purpose of so intimate and inward a history. Yet we see, as it were, the towers and palaces of this "dear City of Zeus" shining in the clear light of the early Christian time, like the break of day over some vast prospect, with the new City, as it were some celestial new Rome in the midst of it.[1]

ii. Access to the Tree.

As the city is social, the tree of life is individual. In the city we enjoy the society of the redeemed; at the tree of life we enjoy fellowship with God, a fellowship which is the peculiar privilege of each one of those who have washed their robes. We receive a name which no one knows except the Giver and the receiver of it. The promise is particular: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love *him*, and we will come unto *him*, and make our abode with *him*."

The tree of life stands out in the first page of God's Word as a sacramental symbol to unfallen man. It was a visible and tangible thing—a tree growing in the garden like other trees, but so inscribed with the word of God that in the use of its fruit unfallen man could receive the spiritual assurance of God's love and favour. In this respect it differed from the other trees of the garden. They were God's permitted gifts to satisfy man's animal wants; but the tree of life has regard to the higher needs of his spiritual nature, which even then had a genuine sacramental

[1] J. Kelman, *Among Famous Books*, 61.

instinct, and hungered for some tangible assurance of God's abiding grace.

When Adam sinned, the way to the tree of life was no longer open to him; and this healthful sacrament became at once forbidden fruit. In very mercy its use was forbidden to him, and put beyond his reach. Evidently its withdrawal has a peculiar solemnity about it: it is to save man from a fresh blunder and a new sin. The dream—that if only, by any means, he could retain the coveted assurance of God's love, all would be well, and all his disobedience would be neutralized, and all his sin forgotten—must at once be rudely broken. Even more than that, there is a dreadful possibility of his destroying all hope of restoration, if he rush in and claim the old symbol of God's love. For him to feed on the tree of life, when in a state of sin and anger and shame, would practically mean a second death.

But when we have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, we have again as good a fitness to approach the tree of life as in primeval innocence. It is our fitness that constitutes our right. It is in being cleansed that the new right to come and eat is valid. Not unsullied innocence itself can come with surer step to have the bread of God's own life given to it than impurity that has been graciously cleansed away. The pardoned rebel, in his robes washed white, has a title to life as good as the angels, who have never defiled their garments.

I am going to a city
Where the living never die,
Where no sickness and no sorrow can molest;
From this body to release me
He is speeding from on high;
He will greet me and escort me to my rest.

Charles M. Alexander, the singer-evangelist, once told the following story of the origin of the hymn of which the above is the chorus:—

"I always like to know how hymns came to be written, and so I asked the man who wrote this hymn how he came to do so. He told me that a friend of his went from New York City to the country. He was far gone in consumption, but in the deceptive nature of the disease thought that he was growing better day by day, till one morning he said he was so much improved in health that he was returning to the city the next day. The writer of the

hymn went to see him in the afternoon, and found him in bed again. 'Why,' he said, 'I thought you were going to the city to-morrow?' The sick man's face lighted up, and he answered, 'I'm going to a city, but it is a city where the living never die, and where no sickness and no sorrow can come.' After his death, his friend, remembering his words, wrote this hymn."

1. Access to the tree of life is a matter of right, not of reward. This we might illustrate by reference to the case of a pupil who is being promoted from a school of one grade to a school that is of a grade higher. He is promoted, not for the purpose of rewarding him for the faithful work he has done in the inferior grades, but because the superior grade is the place for him. He has acquired the "right" to a place in that grade. That pupils are sometimes promoted before they have acquired the right, and prematurely advanced out of consideration of favouritism, is undoubtedly the fact, but advancement on such grounds invalidates the whole scheme of promotion and, in all ordinary relations,—in everything, one may say, except in religion,—is amenable to universal disapproval. Whether in schools or in matters of civil service, individual merit is regarded as the essential condition of promotion; and to set up some other principle of preferment in matters of the future world, and to assume that there is some other legitimate title to the tree of life than simple individual *right* to the tree of life, and *right* to a residence in the celestial city, is to break with what we all recognize as justice in affairs of mundane experience, and to let our future condition be decided by a so-called system of Divine determination too arbitrary and evasive to be tolerated by any responsible human society. If, then, the pupil is promoted, it is not to reward him for his work; and if he is not promoted, it is not to punish him for his lack of work. There is a place where he belongs, and in any well-regulated system of school administration the place where he belongs is the place where he will be kept or put.

2. But if the right is more minutely examined, it will be found to be—

(1) *A right of promise.*—"This is the promise which he promised us, even the life eternal" (1 John ii. 25). The promise is made sure by the washing of the robes in the blood of the Lamb.

"For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen (2 Cor. i. 20).

(2) *A right of inheritance.*—"As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God" (John i. 12). And this Johannine assurance is confirmed by St. Paul: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26). "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17).

(3) *A right of fitness.*—This is the special right of the text, and it is as sure as the others, however astonishing that may be. "Made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light"—that is one thing. That is the entrance which is abundantly ministered unto us through the gates into the city. Fitness also for fellowship so close and intimate that because He lives we live also; and that "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." That is the right to the tree of life.

¶ Almost beyond belief it seems blessed in the eternal kingdom to "have right to the Tree of Life." All is of God's grace, nothing of man's desert. Of His grace it pleases Him to constitute such a privilege our "right"; and our right thenceforward it becomes, whilst first and last all is of grace. "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." As the hart desireth the water-brooks, doth our soul so long after that Tree of Life? Surely yea, if we be not lower than the beasts that perish. . . . Alas! not "surely" at all, unless our present longings can stand one test which too often shames them. For already we have a right to our own precious Tree of Life, Christ in the Sacrament of His most Blessed Body and Blood. Whoso longs not for Christ here, wherefore should he long for Him there? Because our Saviour longed for us on earth, we are convinced that He longs for us in heaven. If we long not for Him on earth, who shall kindle our longing for Him in heaven?

Good Lord Jesus, our only Hope; because we cannot help ourselves, help Thou us. Because we cannot quicken ourselves, quicken Thou us. Because we cannot kindle ourselves, kindle Thou us. Because we cannot cleanse ourselves, cleanse Thou us. Because we cannot heal ourselves, heal Thou us. For Thou hast no pleasure in our impotence, lifelessness, coldness, pollutions, infirmity. If Thou desire our love, who shall give us love wherewith to love Thee except Thou who art Love give it us? Helpless we are, and our helplessness appeals to Thee.[1]

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 537.

Christ's Witness to Himself.

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Christ's Witness to Himself.

I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star. —Rev. xxii. 16.

1. This is the last place in Scripture where the Redeemer bears witness to Himself. A few verses below He once more promises to return—"I come quickly"—but of His own words regarding His own excellence and majesty, this is the last: "I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star."

2. The hours of the great Vision were almost over. The Apostle, who had walked long ago with Jesus as His daily friend, had been entranced for awhile into immediate experience of His presence in the mode of endless life; and now the trance was closing. An influence wholly from above had been imprinting on his soul the message to the Churches, and the order of the future of the Church; and now, at the end, the spiritual Voice has still this word to say; the Lord speaks of Himself once more. Perhaps the cloud of literal night was rolling from the rock of Patmos, and the literal day-star shone above the region of the dawn. But the spiritual view and the inner word were all of the light and of the day. There came a sound full of immortality, "I am the bright, the morning star."

3. The Lord speaks here, indeed, in a manner that is all His own. Nothing is more profoundly characteristic in His words, from first to last, than His witness to Himself. It is one of the main phenomena of the gospel, most perplexing on the theory of unbelief, most truthlike on the theory of belief—this self-witness of the Man of humility and sorrows. He, the sacred exemplar of all self-denial, yet always and immovably presents Himself in terms of self-assertion, and such self-assertion as must mean either Deity or a delusion, moral as well as mental, of infinite depth.

"I am the truth; I am the life; I am the bread of life; I am the true vine; I am the good shepherd." We have but this same tone, perfectly retained, when here the same Voice speaks from amid the realities of the unseen. The imagery, indeed, is lifted to the scenery of the firmament; He who is the genial Vine, and the laborious Shepherd, now also reveals Himself as the Star of Stars in a spiritual sky. But the new splendour of the term only conveys the truth which had always stood in the very front of the testimony of Jesus; the truth of His own sacredness and glory; the doctrine that He, the Son of the Father, is the ultimate peace, and hope, and joy, of the soul of man.

I.

The Root and the Offspring of David.

"I am the root and the offspring of David."

1. In these words Jesus speaks to us as the historic Christ, the Messiah so long expected, who entered human life in connexion with a definite human family and race in a definite part of the world. The root of Jesse in time produced the branch; in His human nature He was the descendant of Israel's famous king. Independently of all theories and interpretations, the Church must continually be going back to the historic Christ if she would keep true to the original gospel. And the facts recorded in the Gospels—we must grow familiar with them, meditate on them, search their significance until they become living truths to us. "I am the root and the offspring of David"; so He speaks, using the language of men, revealing Himself to us in the terms of a perfect human life. We think about Jesus Christ, and, guided by St. John and St. Paul, our thoughts travel wide and high, until, please God, we find that all things are by Him and in Him and unto Him; He is the Centre, as He is the Beginning and the End of all; we cannot explain the universe apart from Him. So the Church has built up her Divine philosophy on the foundation of the incarnate Word, the Reason, and the Utterance of Almighty God. But the Church throughout her history has found it necessary to balance her high and large philosophy by laying equal

emphasis on the facts of Christ's earthly life. Dearly as she values the philosophy of the Incarnation, the Church can never afford to lose touch with Jesus of Nazareth, who lived in Galilee and Judæa and died upon the cross.

¶ There is one lecture, delivered at this period, in 1874, which contains much that is original and powerful, on the all-important subject of our Lord's Divinity. It was the first of a series given to the students of the English Presbyterian College. As a Jew, Dr. Saphir throws himself into the very period and circumstances of his fathers at the advent of Christ. . . . He concluded his lecture with this very touching personal testimony:

"I was brought up in my childhood in the synagogue, and was taught that there was one God, infinite, incomprehensible, holy Spirit; high above us and omnipresent. Much stress was laid on the unity and unicity of God. But this bare, vague, and abstract Monotheism leaves the mind in darkness, while the heart is chilly and desolate. There was another and a better current which then influenced me. It was the national history, as recorded in the books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, and commemorated in the festivals. There I was met by no abstract idea of unicity, but by a loving God, who appeared unto Abraham and spoke to him; who led Israel through the wilderness and dwelt among them; and after, when I thought of the friendly, kind, concrete, and *human* way in which the Lord God then appeared unto His people and dwelt with them, I wondered why He was not now with us, known, loved, and followed.

"One day I was looking at some books, and the title of one arrested my eye. It was *Die Menschwerdung Gottes*—God becoming man. The thought went through my mind like a flash of lightning; it thrilled my soul with a most joyous solemnity. 'Oh,' I said, 'this would be the most beautiful thing, if God were to become man and visit us!' Not many years after I heard about Jesus, and read the Gospels. I felt here the same presence, the same loving, condescending, redeeming, and sanctifying God, that appeared unto the Fathers. I felt that here was Jehovah; that all darkness had disappeared, and that the grand but inconceivable glory here shone upon us in the perfect, peaceful, and holy countenance of the man Christ Jesus. Peniel! I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. . . . To believe in Jesus, the Son of God, is not an abstract dogma, or a theosophic speculation, but a soul-experience, a new heart-life. It is the mystery of godliness. May the result of all we learn and experience on earth be summed

up in this: By God's spirit I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."[1]

2. Christ is at once the Root and the Offshoot, the Beginning and the End of the whole economy associated with the Davidic family. In the Messiah, the latest Scion of the House of David, its earliest ideals and hopes are realized. He is the "Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh," the substance of ancient prophecy, the long-promised and looked-for King. Thus He is connected on the one side with earth, on the other with heaven, "Immanuel, God with us," touched with a feeling of our infirmities, mighty to save. The root of David? Yes, the source of David's humanity, that of God from which David and all else that we call human has come forth. What an astounding claim, yet unmistakable! Before David was, Christ is, the very Christ who in the course of ages became manifest to the world as the Jesus born of David's line, Alpha and Omega, first and last. If, in any sense, Jesus is the root of human nature, as well as the flower thereof, it is evident that we are of lofty lineage, whether we realize it or not.

¶ These New Testament applications of the title, Son of David, are in close harmony with the Old Testament description of the Messiah. David was the founder of the kingdom of Israel. Whenever in later centuries the nation and its welfare were in the mind, the thought naturally turned to David. When the house of David no longer ruled, and the kingdom was shattered, prophets and singers lamented the misfortunes that had overtaken David and his house. When their hopefulness and faith in God expressed itself in visions of a bright future, they naturally spoke of a second David, a branch of his house, who should restore the nation to its former prosperity. As the past, and especially David's rule, grew fairer by contrast with the dismal present, so the new kingdom of David in the future was pictured in extravagant colours. The Kingdom should extend over the whole earth, irresistibly, triumphantly. But this conquest was not conquest for conquest's sake. It was a process without which the longed-for prosperity could, in their imagination, not be realized. It was but an incident in the larger blessedness of the future.[2]

¶ As you look full at the façade of Amiens Cathedral in front,

[1] G. Carlyle, *A Memoir of Adolph Saphir*, 228.

[2] O. H. Gates, in *The Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, ii. 653.

the statues which fill the minor porches are either obscured in their narrower recesses or withdrawn behind each other so as to be unseen. And the entire mass of the front is seen, literally, as built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. Literally *that*; for the receding Porch is a deep "angulus," and its mid-pillar is the "Head of the Corner."

Built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, that is to say of the Prophets who foretold *Christ*, and the Apostles who declared Him. Though Moses was an Apostle, of *God*, he is not here—though Elijah was a Prophet, of *God*, he is not here. The voice of the entire building is that of the Heaven at the Transfiguration. "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him."

There is yet another and a greater prophet still, who, as it seems at first, is not here. Shall the people enter the gates of the temple, singing, "Hosanna to the Son of *David*"; and see no image of His father, then?—Christ Himself declare, "I am the root and the offspring of David"; and yet the Root have no sign near it of its Earth?

Not so. David and his Son are together. David is the pedestal of the Christ. The statue of David is only two-thirds life-size, occupying the niche in front of the pedestal. He holds his sceptre in his right hand, the scroll in his left. King and Prophet, type of all Divinely right doing, and right claiming, and right proclaiming, kinghood, for ever. The entire monolith is one of the noblest pieces of Christian sculpture in the world.[1]

II.

The Morning Star.

Both in the Gospels and in the Book of Revelation, when our Lord uses symbolical language about Himself, He uses such symbols as all can understand; they are universal in their range and common to all men. "The morning star" is one of them; it shines for all, and all men know it, and recognize it with a greeting of welcome. The light by which we live is the true light of the universe. It is not for us alone, but for all who do not acknowledge it as yet.

1. Why should Christ speak of Himself as the Star? We may be perfectly sure that the word, with all its radiant beauty

[1] Ruskin, *The Bible of Amiens*, ch. iv. § 30 (*Works*, xxxiii. 144).

is no mere flight of fancy. Prophecy, not poetry, underlies these last oracles of the Bible; and among the prophecies in which stars form the imagery there is but one which can be thought to point to Messiah—the prophecy of Balaam (Num. xxiv. 17). Balaam had heard, among "the words of God," of a mysterious Person, or at least of a mysterious Power, strong to destroy and save; figured to his soul in vision as a Star, destined in other days to appear out of Israel; and the belief of the Jewish Church, in the lifetime of Jesus, certainly was that the Star of that prediction was the King Messiah. No doubt the import of Balaam's words has been variously explained; but if we believe this utterance in the Apocalypse to be a Divine reality, we are safe in believing along with it, under guidance of the fact that no other similar prediction fairly offers, that it was of Messiah that Balaam had heard in "the words of God," and that he had seen Messiah, in "the vision of the Almighty," as the Star of Jacob.

Prophecy, then, spoke of Messiah as the Star. The word indicated, probably, the royal dignity, touched and glorified with the light of Deity, or of Divinity at least.

¶ There is good evidence that in the time of Christ the "Star" of Num. xxiv. 17 was popularly identified with the Messianic King. This idea may have influenced those New Testament passages where Jesus is represented as the "Morning Star" (Rev. xxii. 16, ii. 28), though it must be remembered that the angels are described symbolically in the Book of Enoch (lxxxvi. 1, 3) as "stars"—a metaphor which helps to explain the symbolism by which Jesus is here described as "the Morning Star." . . . The essential idea of the conception is present in all those passages of the New Testament which speak of the spiritual illumination that accompanies the revelation of the Messiah. . . . The remarkable description of the Messiah as the "Dayspring from on high" in the Song of Zacharias (Luke i. 78), may possibly have been associated in thought with the Messianic Star.[1]

2. But the Voice at Patmos not only claims the primeval prophecy for Jesus, as the King of the new Israel. It expands that prophecy, and discloses truth within truth treasured there. For the Lord does not only assert Himself to be the Star, the bright Star; as of course His brightness must be surpassing if He is in any sense at all a Star. His own presentation of the

[1] G. H. Box.

metaphor has in it something new and special—"I am the morning star." Why was not the word Star left alone in the utterance? In pointing to Messiah as the Star, were not the ideas of brilliancy, and elevation, and all that is ethereal, sufficient? No; it was not to be so. Christ Himself so qualifies the word by this one bright epithet as to show Himself, not as the King merely, but as the King of Morning, around whom gathered, and should gather for ever, all that is real in tenderest hope, and youngest vigour, and most cheerful aspiration, and such beginnings as shall eternally develop and never contract into fixity and decline.

¶ Some traveller of the Norman times is passing along an old English valley as the night begins to deepen. On the hillside facing him groups of peasants are returning from their fields, and they have kindled torches to frighten away the wolves. Through the open doors of the distant hamlet the faint glow of fire comes, and dim tapers flicker in the casements. By and by the valley becomes one long, unbroken shadow. And now at last the curfew sounds from the lowly church on the hill. The peasants have reached their homes, the lights in the casements are quenched, and the scattered habitations are shrouded in darkness. In the clear sky behind the shoulder of the hill a star shines which obeys no sound of curfew. It glittered over the triremes of the Romans as they crossed to Britain's shores. It will hang undimmed over the grave of the youngest child cradled in the hamlet, and will watch the long procession of Normans, Plantagenets, Tudors, Stuarts, to their last resting-places.

And is it not thus with One who is described as the Bright and Morning Star? Prophet, apostle, and evangelist hold out to the dark and erring world the light of life, and by and by the solemn curfew sounds across the heavens, and the light in which we were "willing to walk for a season" has passed from our pathway. The apostles are gone. The reformers have long since followed in their steps. The evangelists of the last century, of imperishable work and memory, do they live for ever? The twilight knell is heard again, and the men who were the lights and guides of our spiritual childhood are no longer with us. But the Lord of the Church abides when His servants vanish; and from His celestial enthronement an unchanged Christ looks down upon each succeeding generation of men, to guide their feet into the way of peace.[1]

[1] T. G. Selby, *The Unheeding God*, 381.

3. This last self-witness of Jesus Christ reminds the disciple that his blessed Lord is no mere name of tender recollection, no dear relic of a perished past, to be drawn sometimes in silence from its casket and clasped with the aching fondness, and sprinkled with the hot tears, of hopeless memory. He is not Hesperus that sets, but Phosphorus that rises, springing into the sky through the earliest dawn; the pledge of reviving life, and growing light, and all the energies and all the pleasures of the happy day. And the word speaks of a kind of joy for which the open day would not be so true a simile. It indicates the delights of hope along with those of fruition; a happiness in which one of the deep elements is always the thought of something yet to be revealed; light with more light to follow, joy to develop into further joy, as the dawn passes into the morning and then into the day.

¶ Do you say, But is this all that Christ is to His Church now—only a "star"? Yes, all—in comparison with what He will be. But remember, "the morning star" makes the daybreak quite sure—it always precedes it—they are never divided—and it is itself brilliant to the midnight that would be without it. Four thousand years, in contrast, our earth was very dark. Nearly two thousand years "the morning star" has shone; and many and many a child of the day has looked on it—been guided by it safe, and recognized its note of hope, and waited the more, with quiet patience, for the morning. And many of those children of the day are still looking on it, and say, as they look out for its coming, in their quiet resting-places, "How long? How long?" And surely it cannot be now very long till the "star" of our faith shall melt away into the sun of our sight; and risen souls shall rise again to bask in its lustre.[1]

4. The metaphor of Christ as the Morning Star suggests—(1) the Distinction He has; (2) the Light He gives; (3) the Cheer He imparts; (4) the Hope He inspires.

(1) *The distinction Christ has.*—The morning star is pre-eminently the star of distinction. It is larger and brighter to view than any other; it is the only star that has light enough to cast a shadow; it is indeed so dazzlingly bright that on this very account we know less about its material surface than about other planets; the light cannot be penetrated to make research. It is, as astronomers tell us, the most brilliant of all the planets, and

[1] J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, iv. 4.

the most beautiful object to us in the heavens. No one can mistake the morning star in the firmament, or confound it with any other orb. It shines pre-eminent and alone. In the words of Milton, it "flames in the forehead of the morning sky." Thus is it with Christ. He is the "bright" as well as the Morning Star. He is without a rival in time, and He will be, even more gloriously, without a rival in eternity. "In all things he has the pre-eminence."

¶ The morning star is what is known in astronomy as the planet Venus. The Greeks and Romans named the planets after their gods and goddesses; but, as old Thomas Adams says, "we need not trouble our heads about such matters, Christ is *our* morning star."[1]

(2) *The light Christ gives.*—The classical names for the morning star mean light-bearer or light-bringer. And this is what Christ is. In Him is the light of truth, of wisdom and knowledge, of righteousness and holiness, of consolation and joy; in Him, above all, is the light of our salvation. That light is in Him, and in Him only; in Him in contrast to the darkness that is everywhere else, and that would always have been but for His rising. It belongs to the day star to appear in the midst of gloom when the shades of night are still thick and heavy, and to announce their departure. It was in this sense that Christ came as the Light of the world.

There was a general sense in which the whole world sat in darkness, as it does still where Christ is not known. "Darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people." When Christ came, the world was in the darkness of guilt, with only light enough to read the sentence of conscience, but none to see how it could be reversed. There was the darkness of depravity—a darkness of untold misery; but when Christ came into the world, a Morning Star appeared upon the brow of night. He scattered the darkness of ignorance by revealing God, salvation, and immortality. He removed the darkness of guilt by atoning for it. He met the darkness of depravity by sending down the effectual beams of truth, purity, and spiritual life, into hearts the most degraded; and He dispelled the darkness of misery by lifting upon the world the light of God's countenance, by solv-

[1] R. Cowan, *The Weakness of God*, 278.

ing the mystery of the grave, and by assuring the children of sorrow that trouble, pain, and death work together for good to them that love God. Thus was Christ the Light of the world when He came; thus is He the Light of the world still; and to His appearing, as to that of the day star amidst the long-enduring gloom, the words of the prophecy may be applied: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

¶ Of the morning star, as light-bringer, herald and harbinger of day, the beauty and transcendent brightness is being continually celebrated by poets, as by Homer (*Il.* xxii. 317); by Virgil (*Æn.* viii. 389); by Ovid (*Trist.* i. 3. 71); and by Milton (*Par. Lost*, iv. 605: "Hesperus, that led the starry host, rode brightest"). Thus does He who is "fairer than the children of men" claim all that is fairest and loveliest in creation as the faint shadow and image of His perfections.[1]

¶ In the Apocalypse Christ is called the Morning Star, but in the Gospels He is the Sun. The comparison in the Apocalypse belongs to a different period and another circle of thought. Its meaning may be illustrated by the expression in the letter to the Church at Thyatira, "he that overcometh . . . I will give him the Morning Star" (Rev. ii. 28). We must understand that the Star is the dawn of a brighter day and a new career. To the victor there shall be given the brightness and splendour and power that outshine the great Empire, and the promise of and entrance upon a higher life. It is the same thought as afterwards suggested the term *dies natalis* for the day on which a martyr died: this day was his birthday, on which he entered into a nobler life. After the same fashion Christ calls Himself in Rev. xxii. 16 the Morning Star, as the beginner and introducer of a new era.[2]

(3) *The cheer Christ imparts.*—Light is cheering; all light is, and not least that of the morning star. It cheers by its present light and beauty, and by its prophecy: "The day cometh." Christ's aim when on earth was always to impart cheer. To the paralytic, laid a wreck at His feet, He said, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven." To the woman who touched His garment and feared she might be chid for presumption, His reply was, "Daughter, be of good cheer; thy faith hath made thee whole."

[1] R. C. Trench. [2] W. M. Ramsay.

To the storm-tossed disciples in the dark night, He, appearing as their Morning Star, exclaimed, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." To St. Paul in prison, looking anxiously out on the future, He said, "Be of good cheer: for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." To all disciples in all trouble that arises, He says, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." And thus, to the end of time, for all His people, He has the word of cheer and the power to work it.

¶ I once said to an old sick-nurse, "You must have often seen the morning star?" "Yes," she said, "and it was always a cheering sight; and then, a little after, the larks would begin to sing, and I thought they were praising God; and when I looked at the buds on the trees and the grass twinkling with the dew, it just seemed as if all nature were full of His presence." Perhaps it is in sickness, or when watching with the sick, that the morning is most longed for and tokens of its coming most welcome. Jonathan Edwards tells of a sickness he had when a youth, shortly after his conversion, and how, when he saw those that watched with him looking wistfully out for the morning, it brought to mind the psalmist's words: "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning." "And then," he says, "when the light of day came in at the window, it refreshed my soul from one morning to another; it seemed to be some image of the light of God's glory."[1]

(4) *The hope Christ inspires.*—The morning star is the star of hope. When we see it in the sky we know that morning is near, light will grow, the sun will soon be up, the day begun. Christ is in this sense also our Morning Star. With reference to the life to come He is so; and with reference also to the life that now is. We get light when we first believe on Him, the light of a full salvation; if not all of it at once in possession, all in sure hope. But there is more light to follow—light of truth, of holiness, of joy. Christ is ever pointing forward, beckoning us on, saying, "Ye shall see greater things." It is the property of the morning star to be the day's harbinger. Other stars rise and shine and set, and leave the darkness still behind them. They belong to the night;

[1] R. Cowan, *The Weakness of God*, 284.

and night wraps her mantle around her own children that cannot pass beyond the sombre shadow. But the morning star is not a child of night but of the day. With Christ as the Morning Star the victory over darkness is decided from the first, and night can never resume her ancient empire. If we abide in Him, and let His words abide in us, our light will grow. Difficulties will be overcome, temptations vanquished, sin subdued, consolation in Him will more and more abound. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning.

¶ In ancient times it used to be imagined that the morning star was different from the evening star; we know, of course, that the two are simply different manifestations of the same planet. So the words of the text gain a fuller meaning. The star that shines at the day's dawn shines also at the day's close. That which has been our beacon of hope and blessing in life's day, will be with us in all its brightness at life's evening, when, in God's mercy, we pass into a state of clearer light, the light not of lamp or sun or star, but the unveiled glory of the Lord God Himself.[1]

¶ *Sept. 18, 1849*: This morning early I had awakened and looked out. It was about four o'clock. The morning star was shining directly before our window in a bright sky. One part of the window was misty with frost, the other clear, and through the clear part the star shone most beautifully. I thought of Christ's words, ὁ ἀστὴρ ὁ λαμπρὸς ὁ πρωϊνός (Rev. xxii. 16). Christ is all this in this world to me till the day break. I fell asleep, and when I next awoke the sun was shining through my room. Shall it not be thus at the Resurrection? Our shadowy views of Christ are passed, and now He is the Sun of Righteousness.[2]

¶ Our Lord is designated as the "Sun of Righteousness" by a Prophet: the sun without peer rules over the planetary system. But Christ with lips full of grace deigns to call Himself "the Bright and Morning Star": which star solitary in office and in dignity lights up hope for the darkened world and promises and ushers in day after night. Yet is it a veritable star amid fellow stars; incomparably the Chiefest, but among ten thousand.[3]

[1] G. A. Cooke, *The Progress of Revelation*, 169.
[2] *Andrew A. Bonar, D.D.: Diary and Letters.*
[3] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 540.

And when, refreshed, the soul once more puts on new life and power,
Oh, let Thine image, Lord, alone, gild the first waking hour!
Let that dear Presence rise and glow fairer than morn's first ray,
And Thy pure radiance overflow the splendour of the day.

So in the hastening evening, so in the coming morn,
When deeper slumber shall be given, and fresher life be born,
Shine out, true Light! to guide my way amid that deepening gloom,
And rise, O Morning Star, the first that dayspring to illume.

I cannot dread the darkness, where Thou wilt watch o'er me,
Nor smile to greet the sunrise, unless Thy smile I see;
Creator, Saviour, Comforter! on Thee my soul is cast;
At morn, at night, in earth, in heaven, be Thou my First and Last.[1]

[1] Eliza Scudder.

Come.

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COME.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.—Rev. xxii. 17.

THE last verses of this book of Scripture are like the final movement of some great concerto, in which we hear all the instruments of the orchestra swelling the flood of triumph. In them many voices are audible alternately. Sometimes it is the Seer who speaks, sometimes an angel, sometimes a deeper voice from the Throne, that of Christ Himself. It is often difficult, therefore, amidst these swift transitions, to tell who is the speaker; but this much is clear, that, just before the verse from which the text is taken, our Lord has been proclaiming from the Throne His royalty and His swift coming to render to every man according to his work, and to gather His own into the heavenly city. After that solemn utterance He is silent for a moment, and there is a great hush. Then our Lord's declaration is met by a response from the Spirit and the Church. The Spirit and the Bride reply, "Come." The call is also to be taken up by every hearer. Each one is to say, "Come." Then, in answer to the cry of the Spirit, of the Church, and of the Faithful, begging Him to come, our Lord speaks again, this time to all the yearning and weary souls among mankind: "He that is athirst, let him come: he that will [that desires to have Jesus], let him take the water of life freely."

Thus there are two comings in this verse—the final coming of Christ to the world, and the invited coming of the world to Christ. Such a way of understanding the text, with its vivid interchange of speakers and subjects, gives a far richer meaning to it than the common interpretation which recognizes in all these "Comes" only a reference to one and the same subject—the approach of men to Jesus Christ through faith in Him.

¶ The Book of the Revelation goes out on a kind of fugue

on the word "Come." "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come"; the Spirit, searching the deep things of man and interpreting the unwritten yearnings of the race, saith, "Come"; the Bride, the Church of Christ, weary yet willing to wait, willing to wait yet weary, saith, "Come." And he "that heareth and understandeth" all that is meant by the coming, saith, "Come." And all together, the Spirit, the Church, and the men who have heard, unite to plead with the man who has not found the water of life, and with tender urgency bid him "Come," and take freely, in order that having drunk from the well of salvation he may add his voice to their prayer. And the answer falls: "Behold, I come quickly." Blessed are they who, after reading "the words of the book of this prophecy," can say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."[1]

We have in the text—

I. An Invitation to Christ to come, presented by
   (1) The Spirit.
   (2) The Bride.
   (3) The Hearer.

II. An Invitation to come to Christ, addressed to
   (1) The Thirsty.
   (2) The Willing.

I.

The Invitation to Christ.

The invitation is given (1) by the Spirit, (2) by the Bride, and (3) by the Hearer. The Spirit and the Bride are not identical, as if the Spirit simply spoke through the Bride, that is, the Church. And yet the writer of the Apocalypse does not mean that the Spirit, as the third Person in the Trinity, gives the invitation directly to the second Person to hasten His coming. By the Spirit, St. John means those who are especially endowed with the spirit of wisdom and of utterance. There was in the Early Church a distinct order or school of "prophets" to whom the word of the Lord came, as it came to the prophets of the old dispensation. But it did not come from without. The word was in their heart. It was the Spirit within them; it was the Spirit of God expressing itself by them. People, says Dr. W. M. Macgregor, had the

[1] C. A. Scott, *The Book of the Revelation*, 336.

wisdom and the courage in those days to believe that in their lowly gatherings the voice of God was sometimes heard. When plain men spoke above themselves, in words all depth and fire and essential insight, speaking so as to catch their fellows up to God, it was reverently confessed that the Spirit of God was speaking; and on the lips of these men, who for the moment had the inspired utterance, the recurring word was, "Come, Lord Jesus." Then the Bride, the whole Church of Christ, joined in the invitation. And last of all the hearer, every hearer of this book; not only the Church in her ideal unity, but each individual member of every Christian congregation where the book shall be read is invited to demand the fulfilment of the Lord's promise, "Behold, I come quickly."

1. *The Spirit says, Come.*—It is true that the spirit of this world and age does not speak thus. The more it strives after ease and comfort in this life, the further it is from wishing to have the present state of things ended by the coming of the Lord. But the Spirit of God and of Christ, which is meant here—the true spiritual life-throb of the children of God; the power of faith and salvation, of hope and patience, by which they fight their way victoriously through this world—this Spirit cries at all times, Come, Lord Jesus; come to our aid in every difficulty; come and advance Thy Kingdom; even by the very obstacles raised by Thine enemies come, and by Thine advent make an end to all sorrow and suffering! This Spirit, emanating as it does from eternity, implants in our hearts a holy longing after this eternity, and is itself the innermost strength of this holy longing, of this love for the Lord and His appearing. It is this same Spirit that creates a deep yearning for freedom from all the bonds of sin and death, and for entire unity with the Lord; that creates the burning desire to see the Church of Christ healed of all schisms and corruption, and the honour of the glory of the Lord made manifest before the whole world, and incontestably established for all eternity. Thus does the Spirit continually incite to the prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

¶ In what respect the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of *them*, differ from the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, which are God's forever, is seldom, as far as I have heard, intelli-

gibly explained from the pulpit; and still less the irreconcilable hostility between the two royalties and realms asserted in its sternness of decision. Whether it be, indeed, Utopian to believe that the kingdom we are taught to pray for may come—verily come—for the asking, it is surely not for man to judge; but it is at least at his choice to resolve that he will no longer render obedience, nor ascribe glory and power, to the Devil. If he cannot find strength in himself to advance towards Heaven, he may at least say to the power of Hell, "Get thee behind me"; and staying himself on the testimony of Him who saith, "Surely I come quickly," ratify his happy prayer with the faithful "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus."[1]

Lo as some venturer, from his stars receiving
  Promise and presage of sublime emprise,
Wears evermore the seal of his believing
  Deep in the dark of solitary eyes,

Yea to the end, in palace or in prison,
  Fashions his fancies of the realm to be,
Fallen from the height or from the deeps arisen,
  Ringed with the rocks and sundered of the sea;—

So even I, and with a pang more thrilling,
  So even I, and with a hope more sweet,
Yearn for the sign, O Christ! of Thy fulfilling,
  Faint for the flaming of Thine advent feet.[2]

2. *The Bride says, Come.*—This is not indeed the heart cry of the whole visible Church; for in so far as she allows herself to be rocked to sleep by the spirit of this world, she becomes, with all her hopes and wishes, so completely a citizen of this world that she wishes the day of the Lord may long be delayed, until she herself has enjoyed life. Therefore she does not say, or at least does not say from her heart, "Come, Lord Jesus." But the Bride who has given herself wholly to the Lord, who keeps the covenant of faith which she has made with Him, and as His betrothed keeps herself unspotted from the world, who knows full well that the good things of this world are fair but poor and perishable, who knows that by the appearing of her Beloved a time of un-

[1] Ruskin, *The Lord's Prayer and the Church* (*Works*, xxxiv. 212).
[2] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul.*

clouded, endless joy and glory will dawn for her, she it is who says and prays with earnest longing, "Come, Lord Jesus."

¶ The Bride is represented here on earth. The Bride is represented there in glory:

One family we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath;
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

But whether it is here on earth or yonder in glory, still the Bride speaks one language. Wherever you meet with a soul in whom there is the spirit of the Bride, and who belongs in God's eternal foreknowledge to that elect company, you will find one whose life is a continuous invitation; for, wherever the Bride is, she still seems to say, "Come."[1]

3. *And let him that heareth say, Come*; that is, let him that heareth with the hearing of faith; let him who has made his own the glorious prospect opened up in the visions of this Book as to the Lord's Second Coming add his individual cry to the cry of the universal Church. The call is to be taken up and repeated by every hearer of the Book; not only the Church in her ideal unity, but each individual member of every Christian congregation where the Book shall be read, is invited to demand the fulfilment of the Lord's promise. "The power of the whole gospel," says Bengel, "concentrates itself in this, that one should be able to respond to this Come, and repeat it from the heart."

¶ I do not know of a better evangelist than a fresh convert. When the love of God is first shed abroad in our hearts, and we receive the fulness of His first blessing, it is so natural that we should go and tell other people of what the Lord has done for us. About three weeks after a mission had been held in the north of England, the mission preacher paid another visit to the neighbourhood, and asked those who had received benefit to meet him in the schoolroom of the church. One of the very first to come forward was a little boy. He came forward like a man, and held out his little hand and grasped the mission preacher by his. His eyes were sparkling with joy. "Well, my dear boy, how are you getting on? Have you been doing the part of a mission preacher?" "Yes," said the boy; "and now, sir, we are all of one mind in our house,

[1] W. H. M. H. Aitken, *God's Everlasting Yea*, 242.

mother and brothers and sisters, all except father, and *we are bound to have him too.*" [1]

¶ All day the caravan had toiled over the hot sand without water. They had thought to find it twenty-four hours before; but when they reached the place where they expected it, the spring was dry. There had been only a few drops of water left in their skin bags then. Now there was none; and the little girl of the company lay sick in her mother's arms, moaning for water.

"Water! Water! Water!" was her constant cry. Her father could not bear it. He stopped the caravan, and said, "We must find water, or the child will die. We will make a bed for her on the sand and leave her here with her mother, and we will go out and search far and wide until we have found water."

Oh, how earnestly the boy Hafiz hunted! Every minute his dear little sister's moans seemed to sound in his ears. He clambered over jagged rocks. He searched over barren wastes, and at last he found a spring that gushed up cool and clear behind a pile of concealing stones. He shouted to the rest and waved his arms, calling to them over the desert, "Come! Come! Here is water!"

With all possible speed they hastened to the blessed spring. Each one shouted to his neighbour, who passed the word on. "Come! Come! Come! Come!" The sound seemed to fill the desert. How they ran to the spot, bringing water skins, gourds, cooking vessels, everything that would hold water!

The little girl took a long, long draught and her moaning ceased. The perspiration came out in drops on her forehead. The flush went out of her face. She turned over and fell into a quiet sleep.

"I believe the water saved her life," said the mother to Hafiz.[2]

II.

The Invitation to the Sinner.

Here we have a remarkable change. We pass at once, and quite abruptly, from an invitation to Christ to hasten His coming to an invitation addressed to those who are thirsty, and those who are willing, to come to Christ. It is as if the writer had intended to ask the thirsty one, and every one that had any good will at all,

[1] W. H. M. H. Aitken, *God's Everlasting Yea*, 245.
[2] From *The Children's Friend*, Richmond, U.S.A.

to join in the welcome to the coming Christ, and then suddenly remembered that that could not be until they knew Christ. So he turns his sentence into an invitation to them to come to Christ, that they may taste and see how gracious the Lord is. Then will they be ready to welcome His coming.

¶ Man was forbidden to come near to the tree after he had sinned in the Garden of Eden. There was a flaming sword to keep him from coming near that tree, but now here there are not only trees of life, but there is also a river of life, and this river of life has its source in the throne of glory, and as it flows along, the word of the Lord is this: "Is any man thirsty? Let him take of the water of life freely." Oh, that grand word "let"! If God says, "Let him," who then is going to deny it?[1]

i. The Invitation to the Thirsty.

There is no animal craving so fierce or so intolerable as the craving of thirst. This may be due to the fact that the deprivation of liquid is a condition with which all the tissues sympathize. Every atom of the body joins in the cry, and the expression is concentrated in the parched mouth and the dry and feverish lips. This great craving of thirst is used in this book to symbolize the craving of the soul, and these plenteous waters are used to shadow forth the abundance of the satisfaction which is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

¶ We must go to the far East and the far South to understand the images which were called up in the mind of an old Jew at the very name of wells and water-springs; and why the Scriptures speak of them as special gifts of God, life-giving and Divine. We must have seen the treeless waste, the blazing sun, the sickening glare, the choking dust, the parched rocks, the distant mountains quivering as in the vapour of a furnace; we must have felt the lassitude of heat, the torment of thirst, ere we can welcome, as did those old Easterns, the well dug long ago by pious hands, whither the maidens come with their jars at eventide, when the stone is rolled away, to water the thirsty flocks; or the living fountain, under the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, with its grove of trees, where all the birds for many a mile flock in, and shake the copses with their song; its lawn of green, on which the long-dazzled eye rests with refreshment and delight; its brook, wandering away—perhaps to be lost soon in burning sand,

[1] A. G. Brown, *God's Full-Orbed Gospel*, 79.

but giving, as far as it flows, Life; a Water of Life to plant, to animal, and to man.[1]

1. Will anything allay this thirst?

(1) Not *sin*. The wonderful thing is that we can ever persuade ourselves that it can. The devil can mix the most insidious potions and can make them sparkle like the water of life, but when we drink them it is as though a man consumes salt water to appease his thirst. Animal gratification can never quench a spiritual craving. It is the most pathetic of all tragedies when a man or woman flees to drink to quieten the soul. It shall be "as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite."

¶ Against the deceitfulness of sin he warned his friends in such terms as these: "Sin says, 'I'm not sin at all.' Then Sin says, 'I'm pleasant.' Yes, pleasant poison. Then Sin says, 'Ah! do you call that sin? Well, it is but a little sin.' Alas! alas! for us men there can be no little sin, unless there be a little God against whom to commit it. Then Sin says, 'It is a common sin; good people do that.' A good man has crooked legs; are crooked legs therefore no evil? He has stiff joints; are stiff joints therefore no evil? Ah! men don't argue that way about the natural evil, but they do about the spiritual evil, because they love sin, and will take any excuse for it, and never readier than when they find it in a good man. Then Sin says, 'If you sin there's Christ to go to.'"[2]

(2) Not *work*. I will join any man, says Jowett, in singing a pæan of blessedness on work; but if hard work will lead to spiritual contentment, the great majority of *my* congregation will be in the enjoyment of spiritual rest. And yet after the hardest day's work, often in the midst of it, there is a sigh, a weariness, a state of staleness, a certain out-of-jointness, which is abundant proof that the old craving is still there like a smoking volcano, and that its inner fires are not yet quenched. Thank God for work, but work can never take the place of God.

¶ The opponents of legislation on the question of limiting the hours of labour induced the Lord Mayor to call a general meeting of London shopkeepers, expecting to carry a resolution

[1] C. Kingsley, *The Water of Life*, 1.

[2] A. Moody Stuart, *Recollections of the late John Duncan*, 109.

against any such measure as he had proposed. Sir John attended and asked for a hearing. Having explained how matters stood, he moved an amendment in favour of his [Shop Hours Regulation] Bill and quoted, as illustrating the hard lives of shop assistants, and especially of women, the Norfolk epitaph:

Here lies a poor woman, who always was tired,
For she lived in a world where too much was required.
Weep not for me, friends, she said, for I'm going
Where there'll neither be cooking nor washing nor sewing.

I go where the loud Hallelujahs are ringing,
But I shall not take any part in the singing.
Then weep not for me, friends, if death do us sever,
For I'm going to do nothing for ever and ever.

"This quotation," he observes, "carried the meeting and the amendment." Variant readings of this epitaph are extant, but the gist of it is the same in all.[1]

(3) Not *money*. The most awful weariness in the world to-day will be found where money abounds. The fact of the matter is, spiritual satisfaction is to be obtained at a counter where money is not accepted as a means of exchange. "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

¶ We have seen what money can do. Every moment we feel its power. But the things it cannot do! You can get out of it all life's bottom things, but you can get none of life's top things. It can feed all the flesh appetites. It will supply you with luxury, with ease. It can buy bows, and reverences, and salutations in the market-place. It is a purveyor to all the devilries—to avarice, to covetousness, to selfishness, to envy, to hatred, to lust, to murder. Not, certainly, that it always produces these things. But it can produce them; it is the soil where they grow; where they have grown in every age and every country of the world. But from all the gold bags in the Bank of England you could not distil one drop of mother love. You can extract from them nothing of the world's highest thought or best feeling. You cannot write a spiritual book on money; no, nor a spiritual chapter. We are trying here, but are failing egregiously. The real soul of humanity gets no rise from this source. Under its power the heart chills; it never expands. Ask whence has come

[1] H. G. Hutchinson, *Life of Sir John Lubbock, Lord Avebury* (1914), i. 223.

the great literature, the noble music, the fine heroisms? They do not hail from Mammon. Gold is a separator, never a uniter.[1]

(4) Not *culture*. Satisfaction cannot be found even in the higher and finer cultures of the mind—in music and art and literature. These ministries can soothe, they can excite, they can gratify, but they cannot satisfy; and when the volume is closed, when the harmonious strains have died away, when the creations of art have been laid aside, the secret yearning asserts itself, and the unsatisfied soul cries out, "I thirst!"

¶ Man, individually, cannot be satisfied with the material, the intellectual, the æsthetic. There is still a part of his nature which rises above these, and demands more. It shows itself in his religions, his philosophies, and in the inordinate graspings of lower natures after the material. This is one answer to the Goethe view of man's chief end—present enjoyment, wisely moderated, and long drawn out. It never has satisfied, and cannot; it is the resource of moral defect or of despair. It is the positivism of Comte gilded, which sometimes affects a high Stoicism and worship of humanity,—as if that could be in the mass which is not in the man,—sometimes falls back by a natural reaction to Epicureanism, and sometimes hovers round the scepticism depicted by the "Preacher."[2]

2. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." The Lord Jesus claims to satisfy the soul; yes, to satisfy the soul as a babe is satisfied to find its mother's breast. "The water that I shall give shall be in him a well." The Lord creates a new well of peace and fruitful satisfaction. For, look you, solid satisfaction lies in the possession of a certain quality of spirit. What is that spirit? What sort of gift would send this congregation away in radiant triumph? If God were now to give me the choice as to what every member of this congregation should receive before we leave the building, what would I choose? I think I would choose three things. First of all, pardon: forgiveness for all our ill doings and all our wasted treasure. Secondly, purity: the washing away of all stains, the searching out of hidden germs and defilement. And thirdly, peace: the sense of the glorious at-one-ness with the glorious God. And if we obtained those three gifts,

[1] J. Brierley, *The Secret of Living*, 41.
[2] John Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 215.

we should all go away with feet like hinds' feet. And these are just the gifts to be found in Christ. "Let him come unto me and drink." We should find pardon; "in whom we have the forgiveness of sins." We should find purity; "He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood." We should find peace; "My peace I give unto you." He is the fountain of these secrets of blessedness. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."[1]

¶ The words "Water of Life" have a spiritual and mystic meaning. The East—and indeed the West likewise—was haunted by dreams of a Water of Life, a Fount of Perpetual Youth, a Cup of Immortality. How could that in man which ought not to die be kept alive? how strengthened and refreshed into perpetual youth? And water—with its life-giving and refreshing powers, often with medicinal properties seemingly miraculous—what better symbol could be found for that which would keep off death? Perhaps there was some reality which answered the symbol, some actual Cup of Immortality, some actual Fount of Youth. But who could attain to them? Surely the gods hid their own special treasure from the grasp of man. Surely that Water of Life was to be sought for far away, amid trackless mountain-peaks, guarded by dragons and demons. For the old legends and dreams, in whatsoever they differed, agreed at least in this, that the Water of Life was far away; infinitely difficult to reach; the prize only of some extraordinary favourite of fortune, or of some being of superhuman energy and endurance. The gods grudged life to mortals, as they grudged them joy and all good things. That God should say Come; that the Water of Life could be a gift, a grace, a boon of free generosity and perfect condescension, never entered into their minds. That the God of gods, the Maker of the universe, should say, "Come, and drink freely"; that He should stoop from heaven to bring life and immortality to light—to tell men what the Water of Life was, and where it was, and how to attain it; much more, that that God should stoop to become incarnate, and suffer and die on the cross, that He might purchase the Water of Life, not for a favoured few, but for all mankind; that He should offer it to all, without condition, stint, or drawback;—this, this, never entered into their wildest dreams.[2]

ii. The Invitation to the Willing.

1. Behind the thirsty there is yet this other class who are invited to come—those who are willing. Willingness to receive the

[1] J. H. Jowett.

[2] C. Kingsley, *The Water of Life*, 6.

truth may exist where as yet there is no thirst for it, and such willingness is of God, and a first step towards eternal life.

¶ However little chance we may seem to have of *doing* anything, we can at least determine to *be* something; not to let our life be filled, like some base vessel, with the offscourings and rinsings of other spirits, but to remember that the water of life is given freely to all who come. That is the worst of our dull view of the great Gospel of Christ. We think—I do not say this profanely but seriously—of that water of life as a series of propositions like the Athanasian Creed!

Christ meant something very different by the water of life. He meant that the soul that was athirst could receive a draught of a spring of cool refreshment and living joy. He did not mean a set of doctrines; doctrines are to life what parchments and title-deeds are to an estate with woods and waters, fields and gardens, houses and cottages, and live people moving to and fro. It is of no use to possess the title-deed if one does not visit one's estate. Doctrines are an attempt to state, in bare and precise language, ideas and thoughts dear and fresh to the heart. It is in qualities, hopes and affections that we live; and if our eyes are opened, we can see, as my friend dreamed he saw, the surface of the hard rock full of moving points, and shimmering with threads of swift life, when the sun has fallen from the height, and the wind comes cool across the moor from the open gates of the evening.[1]

2. This seems to include everyone. But it does not. It excludes a great many persons. "Whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life freely." The Bible invitation turns on the human will. It invites every man that chooses, but there it stops. The Bible rests on the assumption that every man, if he enters into life, must enter into it by his own free choice.

¶ God pays His child no finer compliment than when He trusts him with his destiny. There must be something inexpressibly great in man to merit this surpassing confidence. True, God was held by the alternative of making a race of automatons or a race endowed with choice; and He made the latter. It was counted that such a creature was worth all the cost of pain and woe, of evil and despair; worth the cost of Calvary. But God leaves us not alone: a highway of truth is blazed by revelation, sweet voices counsel us to walk thereon, an inner Spirit offers holy motive, and a Saviour takes the thrust of an avenging sword.

[1] A. C. Benson, *Joyous Gard*, 134.

Above, below, around, within us tender help is proffered; but no power may touch with lightest hand the sceptre of the soul. There in the throne-room man is master. A thousand ministries from heaven wait his nod; a thousand demons from the pit attend his will.[1]

¶ If you ask me why the King is upon the throne, I reply in the words he insists should be on all his coins, "Dei Gratia"—by the grace of God. But, on the other hand, if you ask me why yonder criminal is in the cell, I dare not reply, By the will of God; but I say, Because he has done wrong; and I insist that he is morally responsible, else you must not shut him up as a criminal. You may confine him as a lunatic, as one who is dangerous to society; but do not punish him as a criminal for what he had no power to avoid. No, these two things are quite compatible—the Divine sovereignty and the free agency of man; and herein consists the glory of God. He performs His purposes not by mere machines, but by living moral agents, who have this power of will. We all acknowledge that the power of the statesman, who moulds the will of the people, is of a higher order than the power of a blacksmith, who moulds a dead, resistless piece of iron to his purpose. So God carries out His own will, though liable to be crossed at every turn by the will of man.[2]

¶ With the call to come, give us the will to come, most Bountiful Lord Jesus. Thou who turnedst water into wine; who saidst, "Give me to drink"; who criest, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink"; who saidst, "With desire I have desired"; who declarest, "My blood is drink indeed"; who saidst in extremity, "I thirst"; suffer us not to make ourselves as Dives, but join us to Thyself and quench our thirst.[3]

¶ A visitor to Dr. Horatius Bonar's church (about 1876) says: "His address was founded on the words 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come'—'the last invitation in the Bible.' It was marked by the absence of all attempt at originality. It was simply an invitation—warm, loving, urgent. With one of the most winning faces I ever saw, he closed: 'Whosoever—that includes *you*: whosoever *will*—does *that* include you?'"

Long since that aged saint hath reached the fair celestial shore,
And gained the martyr's crown, for he the martyr's suffering bore;

[1] C. G. Doney, *The Throne-Room of the Soul*, 11.
[2] E. A. Stuart, *Children of God*, 162.
[3] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep*, 542.

Long since his happy feet have stood within his Father's home,
Yet *still* the mighty voice he heard, with ceaseless cry, saith,
"Come!"

And life's bright fountain springeth yet, as free, and fresh, and fair,
As when in Patmos' dreary Isle it cheered the exile there!
And hark! the Spirit and the Bride repeat in mercy still,
That he who is athirst may drink—yea, *whosoever will*!

O blessed voices! be it ours your loving call to hear
And so obey that when, at last, from yonder radiant sphere
The Heavenly Bridegroom shall descend to claim His own again,
We may lift up our heads and say, "Lord, even so, Amen!"[1]

[1] Elizabeth Surr.

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